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THE CONSOLIDATION OF RURAL SCHOOLS

MESTON TRAINING COLLEGE
MADRAS

The Consolidation of Rural Schools

By G. W. PARKYN

MESTON TRAINING COLLEGE
MADRAS

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Preface

Rural life has undergone very striking changes during the past half-century. In particular, the spread of transport systems and other means of communication has linked town and country more closely together than would have been conceivable two generations ago. An American sociologist has said that centralization of economic and social life has made rural settlements that were once fairly complete centres of communal living little more than work-places and dormitories. Education has followed the dominant trend. Small country schools have been closed and their children conveyed to larger schools in more populous areas. The movement has had powerful forces behind it; and, apart altogether from economic and administrative factors, there has been a strong body of opinion in favour of large school units on purely educational grounds. There have been those, however, both inside and outside New Zealand, who have opposed the centralization of education at the primary school stage. In England, the authors of the Education Act of 1944 tried hard to ensure the preservation of the village schools, and it is interesting to note that as recently as last year the Rt. Hon. R. A. Butler took part in a lively controversy in the *New Statesman and Nation* (14 July 1951) with the aim of helping to save the village schools, some 1,800 of which, it was said, were under threat of being closed by the education authorities.

In this country the desirability of the process of centralizing the small rural schools was very much taken for granted for many years. During the past decade, however, a fairly deep cleavage of opinion has appeared between those who still

favour it and those who, for one reason or another, have come to doubt its wisdom. Eventually the New Zealand Educational Institute suggested that the New Zealand Council for Educational Research might well sponsor a comprehensive study of the educational and social effects of consolidation, and in 1946 the Council decided to act, entrusting the work to H. C. McQueen, its own Research Officer. Mr McQueen, therefore, was responsible for beginning the investigation reported here. He compiled a valuable historical digest of published statements on the policy of consolidation as it has developed in New Zealand; he drew up the general plan of the survey, indicating some of the main problems and sketching an approach to them; and he made a start on the field work itself. Then, in 1947, he was appointed Commissioner of Apprenticeship, and had to relinquish the investigation.

When I was appointed Research Officer in his place the Council asked me to take up the survey where Mr McQueen had left off. This I was more than willing to do. The central problem is full of intrinsic interest to one who is concerned with education. More than this, it seemed to me that nothing could bring one closer to the realities of education in New Zealand than the first-hand study of rural life and rural schooling that would be the necessary groundwork of the investigation. I returned from overseas at the end of 1948, and early in the following year began the field work, which took me to many parts of the country and provided the main body of information on which my report is based. On taking up the work I naturally discussed with Mr McQueen a great many of the methodological problems posed by such an investigation as this. His interest in the study has remained keen, and I am grateful to him for his careful and critical reading of the manuscript of the report. It should be pointed out, however, that I alone am responsible for the published report.

The investigation would have been impossible to carry out had it not been for the generous help of officers of the education boards and the Education Department, and of the teachers and school committee members in all parts of New Zealand

who have helped me to understand their schools, have offered me their hospitality, and have conducted me round their districts. A large number of country parents, too, have written long and valuable letters to me about specific difficulties they are encountering in the educating of their children. Finally I wish to thank the Council's official readers and others who have painstakingly criticized various versions of the manuscript and have helped to give it its present shape.

G. W. PARKYN

WELLINGTON
February 1952

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THE CONSOLIDATION OF RURAL SCHOOLS

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A Problem of Rural Education

How to provide a good schooling for rural children has always been an important and difficult problem in New Zealand. About the size of Great Britain, but with a population that is only just reaching the two million mark, the country is sparsely settled; and a third of its people live in rural districts. The difficulties were great enough in the days when education was thought of in simple terms as instructing children in the rudiments of learning—reading, writing, and arithmetic—and when the aim was to build a schoolhouse and install a master in every settlement, or at convenient points not more than six to eight miles apart along the rough waggon tracks that passed for roads. As the idea of education enlarged, however, the country schools faced new difficulties, common to most schools, it is true, but all the harder to surmount where pupils and teachers are few. Today, many of the educational ideals that the pioneers worked for have been realized. For a generation at least almost everyone has been able to read and write and figure; few countries, indeed, have managed to bring better educational opportunities within the reach of rural children. Yet rural education still has its problems. This is notably so at the secondary level, where the difficulty of providing a full and varied education is acute; but the primary schools have their problems, too, and the present study of consolidation—a recent attempt to provide country districts with better schools—deals with some of the more urgent of them.

In the first half-century of European settlement the main task was to build year by year an ever increasing number of

schools throughout the thinly populated countryside as fast as the settlers could guarantee that a given number of children would attend, and as fast as people could be found, trained or untrained, to teach in them. In those early years the number of rural schools rose steadily, and it continued to rise till about 1927, after which, for various reasons, a rapid decline set in. Many small schools have been closed and their pupils conveyed elsewhere; and in other places, where once new schools would have been built, children have travelled by train, motor car, or bus to an existing school nearby. It is with the results of this process of centralization, or consolidation as it is called, that this study is concerned.

The decline of the small school. In tracing the rise and decline of the small country school it will be convenient to begin with the year 1878, the year in which a Ministry of Education for the whole of New Zealand first took over the general control of education from the provincial education boards. In the report of the first Minister of Education[1] we find that in 1877 there were about 730 public primary schools in New Zealand and that some 72,000 children were enrolled at them. Over 420 (58 per cent) of these schools had only one teacher, and about 150 (20 per cent) had two teachers. The one-teacher schools had a roll of over 20,000 (about 28 per cent of all school children enrolled), and the two-teacher schools had a roll of about 15,000 (21 per cent). These typical rural schools, therefore, with their one or two teachers, accounted for more than three-quarters of the schools of the colony and provided primary education for nearly half of the children.

The increase in schools after the Education Act of 1877 was rapid. By the end of the century over 1,700 public primary schools were open, of which number some 1,040 (61 per cent) had one teacher and about 370 (22 per cent) had two. During the first quarter of the twentieth century,

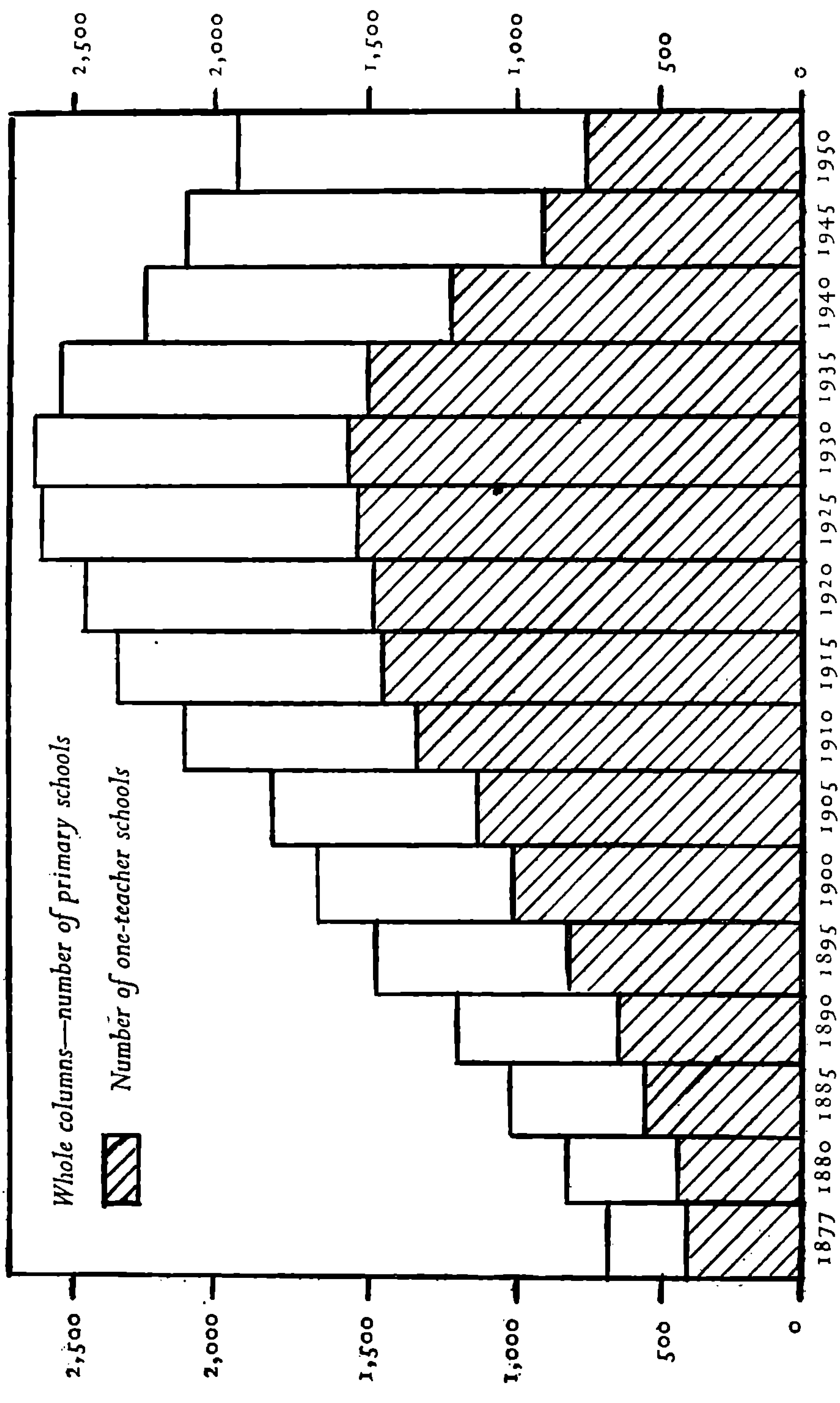
[1] Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives, *A. to J.* H-1 1878, 1.

too, land settlement went on (though at a slower pace and accompanied by a rapid growth of towns) and in 1927 the peak was reached in the number of primary schools open. In that year there were 2,601 public primary schools, of which just over 1,550 (60 per cent) had only one teacher and about 560 (21 per cent) had two. Between them these one- and two-teacher schools enrolled nearly 30 per cent of the 210,000 children attending public primary schools. In that year, too, which marked the peak both for all schools and for small rural schools the proportion of one- and two-teacher schools still stood at the high level of over four-fifths which it had reached at the turn of the century. However, they no longer held so large a proportion of the nation's children as they did in the early days.

Since the peak year of 1927 there has been a constant fall in the number of public primary schools. Twenty years later, when the total school population was still much the same (after a period of decrease due to the lowered birth-rate that followed the economic stress of the thirties) there were only about 1,900 schools in all, of which some 780 (41 per cent) had a single teacher and 450 (24 per cent) had two teachers. Between them they made up about two-thirds of the public primary schools, yet they provided for only about 33,000 children (16 per cent of the enrolment). The decline can be clearly seen in the Figure. Since 1947, with the steady growth in school population, there has been a slight increase in sole-charge schools, which in 1950 numbered about 800.

There are several reasons for this fall in numbers between 1927 and 1947. In some places the child population has dropped, and schools have been closed through lack of pupils. In other places there has been such an increase of children that one-teacher schools have grown into two-teacher schools and two-teacher schools into larger ones, a process that has been aided by the gradual decrease in the number of pupils each teacher has had to manage. In the mid-nineteenth century it was not uncommon for a sole teacher to have fifty pupils in his school. Later it was provided that

THE RISE AND DECLINE OF THE ONE-TEACHER SCHOOL



an assistant would be appointed when the attendance reached forty. The Education Act of 1908 introduced a new staffing ratio which made thirty-six the effective average attendance entitling a school to have two teachers, and in 1936 when staffing was based on the number of pupils on the roll rather than on the average attendance the position was further improved. All of these factors have combined to cause a decrease in the number of one- and two-teacher schools. In addition, however, there has been the policy of closing schools and conveying their pupils elsewhere—consolidation.

We have seen that the number of one-teacher schools has been halved in the past twenty years. Out of about 800 schools that no longer appear in the records as sole-teacher schools as many as 480 appear to have been closed by the process of consolidation. Of the two-teacher schools about forty have been consolidated, and in addition perhaps a half-dozen larger schools have been closed. Thus it is clear that consolidation is the most important single factor in the decline of the small rural school. How has this come about?

An historical note. It is always interesting to trace back through official documents the development of an idea that has come to be widely accepted as part of our educational policy. It is interesting, too, and not entirely unprofitable, to wonder about the sources from which the idea arose and to consider the various aims of those who became its advocates. Thus one might well ask whether some member of the Wanganui Education Board had in 1888 what was for him at least an original idea, or whether some inkling of the birth of that idea in Massachusetts and Ohio in the seventies had just reached New Zealand. The documents do not tell us how it came about, but the fact nevertheless can be recorded: the Wanganui Education Board[2] reported in 1889 that 'with a view to economy as well as increased efficiency in the teaching staff' it had attempted, but without success, to amalgamate some of the small schools near Wanganui. One

[2] *A. to J.* E-1 1889, 60.

of the arguments put forward, economy, continued to be used by advocates of what is now called consolidation until the nineteen-thirties, when it was controverted by Ministerial statements; the other, increased efficiency, has been employed right up to the present day. It is recorded that in 1896 the Otago Education Board arranged for the transport of pupils to Tapanui from Dalvey in order to avoid building a school there. This must have been one of the earliest examples of a special conveyance service in New Zealand. The *Tapanui Courier* of 9 September 1896 read the signs of the times, and remarked, 'This new departure promises to obviate the necessity for so many small schools.'

Till 1912, however, references to consolidation are few in number. In 1901 Robert Lee,[3] an inspector of schools for the Wellington Education Board, suggested 'combining a few existing schools', and the Nelson inspectors, G. A. Harkness and D. A. Strachan, pointed out in 1903 that 'the conveyance to centres of children from outlying parts' had not been tried in their district.[4] In the following year T. R. Fleming and F. H. Bakewell, Lee's successors in Wellington, were the first to refer to oversea practice, particularly in parts of the United States and in Victoria. They used the term 'central school', taking it apparently from the report of one of the members (Turner) of a Commission on Education in New South Wales,[5] and they concluded their statement with a sentence which has a very modern ring: 'the whole environment of every district must be taken into consideration in dealing with applications [for consolidation] in the future.' Again, in 1907, the North Canterbury inspectors, T. Ritchie, T. S. Foster, and E. K. Mulgan, advocated centralization in their district, which, they said, offered 'exceptional facilities' [6] They quoted at some length favourable arguments from a New South Wales report in which photographs of two drags and a well-equipped motor launch seem to have appeared.

[3] I. *to J.* E-1B 1901, 13.
[4] I. *to J.* E-1B 1903, 33.
[5] *A. to J.* E-1B 1904, 14.
[6] *A. to J.* E-1B 1907, 35-6.

Opinion was apparently becoming well formed on the subject, and the Cohen Commission of 1912 heard a great deal of evidence in favour of centralization, and little against it.[7] The Commission itself summed up the advantages, quoting from a Wisconsin report, and 'strongly recommended that an attempt at consolidation should be made forthwith.' This appears to be the first use of the word 'consolidation' in official papers.

In the course of the next twelve years consolidation was often mentioned in the reports of inspectors and education boards, and occasionally in statements of the Education Department. Departmental opinion evidently warmed towards the idea, however, for in 1924 the Minister of Education (C. J. Parr) said, ' this year a definite application of the policy has been made at Otorohanga' (by conveying children to an existing school). In 1925 his report mentioned 'two different centres', which were Piopio and Oxford, and official records show that in fact Piopio was the first to operate as a specially established consolidated school.

From 1925 onwards consolidation was generally accepted as desirable by educational administrators. The idea had now become a policy, and except during the depression years the process went on all over New Zealand, until in 1942 it was virtually brought to a halt by shortages arising from war conditions. After the war further proposals for consolidation began to be made; but in the meantime a considerable body of opinion had grown up which doubted whether consolidation was the best way of achieving the Education Department's aim of giving 'to every country child educational facilities as nearly as possible equal to those open to the city child, whilst still providing for rural areas a type of education that fits children for happy and useful life in the country.'[8] From several quarters the suggestion was made that consolidation should be the subject of a careful enquiry. The time is therefore opportune for taking stock of the situation, for

[7] Its report and the evidence are printed in *A. to J.* E-12 1912.

[8] *A. to J.* E-1 1946, 9.

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making a comprehensive study of the educational effects of consolidation, and for reconsidering the general problem of education in rural districts.

One point remains to be made in passing. In the past New Zealand opinion has often been influenced in favour of consolidation by educational developments in the United States of America. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the administration of education in the two countries which makes some of the most cogent American arguments irrelevant here. The difference is this. In few parts of New Zealand was the local school district ever primarily responsible for educational finance and administration. From 1853 to 1877 the basic responsibility for the provision of school buildings and equipment and the appointment, control, and payment of teachers rested with the provincial governments, and administration came to be placed in the hands of education boards, one for each province. After provincial governments were abolished in 1876 educational finance became a charge on the central government, though administration in the main was left in the hands of the provincial education boards. In the United States local provision and control remain, and consolidation, therefore, is a process of merging a number of small school districts in order to provide a wider and richer source of funds for education, to equalize somewhat the differing financial resources of small districts, to build high schools serving a large area, and, if desired, to allow the centralizing of rural elementary schools. In New Zealand, on the other hand, a uniform provision of basic educational finance for primary schools was instituted by the Education Act of 1877, rural district high schools have been able to be provided at need by the provincial education boards, and in 1901 uniform conditions of employment, tenure, and payment of teachers were adopted for the whole country. What is meant by 'consolidation' in New Zealand, then, is really only a measure of centralization of rural primary schools without any change in the basic financial and administrative responsibilities of the

education authorities. Much confusion of thought would have been saved if the word consolidation had never replaced the earlier term centralization in the educational literature of New Zealand.

Types of consolidation. The process of consolidation takes many different forms. It varies in nature according to the ages of the children concerned, the number of schools closed in any district, the size of the schools upon which centralization is directed, and the kind of community in which the consolidated schools are placed.

(*a*) As far as the age of the children is concerned the usual form of consolidation is that which results from closing one complete primary school in which a single teacher has been in charge of children ranging from the Primer classes to Form II (five-year-olds to thirteen- or fourteen-year-olds) and representing, on the average, eight years of school life. These children will be taken either to a larger primary school of similar type or to a district high school, which is a primary school with a secondary 'top' attached to it, comprising Forms III, IV, V, and sometimes a Sixth. In a few places (the Matamata district for example) only Forms I and II of the rural primary schools have been consolidated, the children going to the intermediate department of a post-primary school along with the older children who are attending the secondary school proper. This makes a very different pattern: a central intermediate and high school surrounded by small primary schools taking children only up to Standard 4.

(*b*) When we consider the number of schools closed in each consolidation we find that the most common case is that in which a single school is closed (usually a one-teacher school with perhaps only a dozen children) and its pupils are taken by either private or public conveyance to the next school, which may be almost any size from a small one-teacher school to a large city primary school or a district high school. More than a quarter of the 480 schools closed have been consolidated in this manner; or, to state the

position in another way, of approximately 270 schools upon which consolidation has been made, more than half have received children from only one other school. About 50 have had two schools contributing to them, 30 have had three schools, 13 have had four, and 20 have had more than four schools. These figures must be regarded as only roughly accurate, for in many cases it is hard to decide whether consolidation has really taken place or not—as, for example, when a school has been closed for some years through lack of pupils and then, when young children are again found in the district, the education board provides conveyance for them to another school.

It may be thought that such instances as those involving only one or two schools should not really be included in this survey at all, and that by the term 'consolidated school' one should refer only to the larger kind in which at least four or five schools are closed. There is, indeed, something to be said for such a limitation in the use of terms. It would, I think, be reasonable enough not to call a school a consolidated one unless the extent of the consolidation is great enough to give something of a distinctive character to it: when it is the central school of a considerable district and a fairly large proportion of its pupils are brought in from outlying localities, as, for example, at Hawarden, or Opunake. The present study, however, is concerned not so much with consolidated schools in themselves as with the process of consolidation. It will attempt to answer the question whether the process is a good one or not. To the children who are being educated in the local school its consolidation is important whether theirs is the only school that is to be closed or whether it is just one of a dozen. Moreover, whether the central school is already a large borough school on which just the one school is to be consolidated, or whether it is a small school which will be changed into something quite different by the centralizing of perhaps six others, is a matter that is quite relevant to the one school whose closing is being considered. To go to the one kind of large

school may be an advantage to its children, to go to the other may not. This is a question which really hinges on the type of central school involved, and the type is certainly affected by the number of schools to be closed. In the meantime, therefore, let it be granted that all degrees of consolidation should be considered relevant.

(*c*) The schools on which consolidation has taken place have varied in size (prior to consolidation) all the way from one-teacher schools with only a dozen pupils, to large district high schools with more than 700 pupils and twenty or more teachers. Nearly half of them, however, had fewer than 70 children and had one or two teachers. A quarter had between 70 and 160 pupils, with three to five teachers. In the great majority of cases, therefore, the consolidated school will not have been made much bigger: one-teacher schools have become two-teacher schools, two-teacher schools have become three-teacher schools, and the larger ones have often been left practically unchanged—though growth of population in the contributing districts can alter the situation in a few years. Where several schools have been closed and their children have been taken to one small school, however, the greatest changes are immediately apparent. Then, additional classrooms are provided or a new school is built, and a large school grows up in quite a small settlement or even in the open country.

(*d*) Finally, consolidated schools vary considerably in the sociological structure of their districts. Most of the one-teacher schools that have been closed (over 95 per cent, indeed) have been of the 'open-country' type. The school is set on a country road or at the cross-roads some distance from any dwelling other than that of the teacher. Scattered at distances of a half a mile or a mile apart are farmhouses where the pupils live. In some places the nucleus of a village exists—one or two dwellings, the district hall, perhaps a church, perhaps a store. The two-teacher schools are usually to be found in such little villages, and indeed sometimes in larger settlements that have narrowly achieved the

distinction of being referred to in the official census reports as townships. These usually have a population of round about 200 people.

When such schools are closed their children are often conveyed to similar schools nearby, with the result that a two-, three-, or four-teacher school may arise in what is still the same sort of country district; or the children may be taken to a nearby township of from 200 to 1,000 people where they will go to a school having four, five, or six teachers and perhaps a secondary department with one or two teachers. On the other hand if the number of schools closed is large and the district is closely settled so many children may be taken to the centre that the population of the school may even exceed that of the township, and a fairly large district high school may be found. Yet another pattern results when the country school that is closed is near to a borough of 2,000 to 3,000 people or more: the rural children in this case virtually come to town for their primary schooling.

To give some idea of the distribution of consolidated schools in rural and urban communities the following analysis will be useful. In about half of the cases in which only one school was closed the consolidated schools are to be found in country districts where settlement has not been dense enough to give rise to even the smallest villages. They are the typical open-road or cross-roads schools. Just over a quarter are to be found in townships of under 500 people. The rest are either in larger townships with a population between 500 and 1,000 people or in small country towns with from 1,000 to 5,000 people or occasionally on the outskirts of large towns. The consolidated schools which result from closing two schools are in a rather different position. Nearly half of them are found in small townships, only a quarter are in the open country, and the rest are mainly in the larger townships and the small towns. As for the large consolidated schools, they are nearly always in rural townships and small towns, as at Owaka, Seddon or Te

Awamutu, though there are two striking exceptions in open-country areas—Tapawera and Clutha Valley. Thus it will be seen that almost every combination of size of school and size of settlement is to be found, excepting only that there are no large-scale consolidations in the cities and the larger towns, since any rural schools that have been closed on the fringes of cities have had their children conveyed to separate schools in different suburbs.

Pros and cons. The basic aim of this study has been to find, sift, and weigh up the evidence bearing on the claims that are made in favour of consolidating or retaining small rural schools. Before presenting and discussing the evidence, therefore, it would be well to give a brief outline of the arguments commonly used when consolidation is debated. A fairly clear picture can be drawn by summarizing the results of a questionnaire prepared by W F. H. Sutton and answered by the headmasters of the majority of consolidated schools in New Zealand as well as by a large number of sole-charge teachers.[9] To make this summary even more representative of informed opinion I have worked into it the views of a large number of country parents, some expressed in the columns of such journals as *Straight Furrow*[10] and some written to me personally.

Among the advantages claimed for the consolidated school the following were most frequently stated: better opportunities for social contacts, congenial friendships, and healthy emotional development; specialist teachers and separate infant departments; better equipment for sports, and amenities such as manual training workshops and dental clinics; pupils' clubs and committees which give opportunities for co-operation and leadership; ability grouping to make allowance for the individual differences in children and to raise the standard

[9] W. F. H. Sutton, *An Enquiry into the Advantages and Disadvantages of the Sole-Charge School compared with those of the Consolidated School,* 140-52. M. A. Thesis, Canterbury University College 1945.

[10] See *Straight Furrow,* July to November, 1946.

of scholastic attainment; elimination of the long walk to school in bad weather by the provision of school buses. In addition, the following advantages were cited by a few teachers or parents: the pupils are taught by more highly graded and experienced teachers; school meals can be provided; bus services allow district high schools to be formed; the large school avoids the dangers of emotional strain resulting from thrusting a few children continually together and gives children the experience of knowing a large number of teachers with a wider variety of interests than they would meet in a sole-charge school.

As one might expect, the small country school has always had its devoted supporters, too, and it would be well to point out some of the commoner opinions given in its favour. The small school, it is said, gives its children a training in self-reliance, responsibility, and independent study; instruction must be suited to each individual and this makes it easier for the teacher to see that children learn at their own rate; the classification of pupils is individualized to a high degree and promotions can be easily made at any time of the year; there is greater continuity in education when one teacher is responsible for the whole age range; the wide span of ages in the school is a constant stimulus to the younger child; patience and tolerance are developed in the bigger children in their relations with the little ones whom they help in work and in play; the children learn to organize their own games and become ingenious at inventing or improvising them; there is a community spirit about the small school, the centre of its district, which is lost in the larger places; the children are a happy family and learn self-discipline without much external control; the teacher knows every child's parents and his home circumstances and can take these into account in his work.

Consolidation, on the other hand, is thought to have many disadvantages, of which the following are those most commonly pointed out. Where teachers drive school buses they often find it impossible to take part in after-school

sports, and they have little time for classroom preparation; the bus trips are tiring for the smaller children and often cause the children to have a much longer day than is good for them; large classes crowded into small rooms are no improvement on the small groups found in one-teacher schools; local interest in the school is difficult to arouse when so many of its pupils come from a distance, and parent-teacher relations are apt to be distant.

Even so bald a list of pros and cons as this will be enough to show the complex nature of the educational problems involved. Before proceeding further it may be well to outline the methods used in the course of the investigation reported here.

The general nature of the research. Research of the kind attempted here requires essentially the method of comparison. The educative influence of one sort of schooling must be compared with that of a different kind. At first sight it might be thought possible to make direct comparisons by pooling the results derived from tests of scholastic attainments, assessments of social development, and so on, of the children in a representative sample of consolidated schools and small country schools scattered at random throughout New Zealand. Further consideration, however, makes it clear that such a method would be unsatisfactory. The comparisons must be made between different educational arrangements *within* any particular district or locality, for communities differ in size and characteristics, the density of population and the provision of schools differ, and one can note considerable variation in the outlook of the children and in their level of general intelligence. For some things, such as intelligence, no doubt samples could be obtained that would be extensive enough to be representative. For things like the nature and quality of community life, however, the sort of homogeneity implied by sampling techniques certainly would not be found: New Zealand is small, and there would be too few examples of each kind of community and educational arrangement to

guarantee that such a method could really equalize the effects of the many irrelevant causative factors.

The only appropriate way to approach the problem, then, is to make detailed individual studies of suitable districts, comparing within them the central consolidated school and any peripheral small schools. In this way each group of small schools would be compared with a consolidated school in similar geographic, economic, sociological, and educational circumstances.

While some data could be obtained from teachers, administrators, and parents by the use of questionnaires and tests delivered through the post, the greater part of the information needed had to be secured by first-hand investigation. For this purpose extensive field studies were made in different parts of New Zealand. They were of two kinds, general and special. During the general field trips I lived for some considerable time in each particular district—in one case for over five weeks. I visited nearly every school in the locality that might justly enter into the comparisons and administered various tests to the children, observed them at work and at play, travelled every bus route with them (usually in the winter term) and had many talks with them. Naturally, many discussions took place with the teachers and bus drivers and when possible with committeemen and parents too, either at meetings of parent-teacher associations specially arranged for the purpose or, less formally, through the courtesy of teachers who were on many occasions good enough to drive me round the district to meet people who had special knowledge and were interested in the survey.

After several intensive field trips of this sort had been made I found that the results of observation were tending to suggest consistent answers to many of the questions, but that others remained on which the evidence was still either inconclusive or even conflicting. To deal with these it was necessary to make special field trips of shorter duration, a few days or a week in length, to places specially selected because of the light each might throw upon one particular

problem. In this way, uncommon and difficult points were dealt with one by one until reasonably firm conclusions appeared to be justified.

These studies were spread over three years, and several months in all were spent in the field work itself, which extended from one end of New Zealand to the other. In all, nearly 50 school districts or contributory districts were visited specifically for the purposes of the survey, and a close study was made of 22 one- and two-teacher schools, 10 of the larger consolidated schools, and more than 30 other schools of various kinds. Further, several other consolidated schools and many small rural schools have become well known to me in the past few years, and I have been able to use my knowledge of these at many points in this study. Finally, I have had access to relevant information about more than 60 schools that I have not seen.

The particular methods used to obtain the different kinds of data need not be described here, as they will become apparent during the course of the report. Certain general considerations, however, that had a bearing upon the plan of the investigation, should be noted. First came the central issue of the study—whether the larger school which results from consolidation is a better medium of education than the smaller school it displaces. It has already been shown that one- and two-teacher schools are the ones most commonly closed, and that while in about half the cases the children would be transferred to schools only slightly bigger,[11] in the other half of the cases the consolidated schools would be many times larger and might be expected to differ appreciably in nature from the contributory schools. The central problem, therefore, has distinct facets, according as the consolidated schools differ in size. Precisely what are the significant differences in size and what qualities are associated with them could not, of course, be determined until the data

[11] Throughout the report, therefore, the following terminology is used: *small school*—one or two teachers; *medium-sized school*—three to six teachers; *large school*—seven or more teachers.

had been gathered. Nevertheless the various possibilities had to be taken into account. Not that by arriving at firm conclusions on these matters we should always be in a position to decide just how big our schools ought to be—social and geographical conditions seldom give the administrator very much control over these matters—but if we knew the possibilities of consolidation in any particular district we would be able to say which of several possible types of consolidation would be best and, on balance, whether or not consolidation would be worth while.

Secondly, it was necessary to remember throughout the study that the importance to be attached to different pros and cons might not be the same at all stages of the educational process. Criteria that are very relevant when we think of little children in the infant departments—length of bus journeys, for example—may be less relevant when we consider pupils at the intermediate stage; criteria that are of the greatest importance in adolescence—the need of opportunities for widening social contacts, for example—may not have the same compelling quality in the case of children in the junior standards of the primary school.

Again, it was one of the difficulties of the investigation that a very large number of things had to be considered. Education is a comprehensive process, including far more than simple schooling, yet a great deal of out-of-school education is deeply influenced by what goes on in the narrower sphere of school life. The research could therefore not be confined simply and solely to classroom instruction, nor yet even to the immediate influence of the school on the child socially and emotionally as well as scholastically. It was equally necessary to examine the effect of the school on the community in which it exists and the effect that this in turn has upon the children. These things are broader than schooling itself, yet the provision of a school of one sort or another has a very great influence on them and they were clearly relevant to our problem.

But while the sheer number of criteria can make the work

of analysis and comparison long and hard it is the need to weigh the criteria themselves which gives most trouble. All are not of equal importance; when a judgment is to be made some must count for more than others. The effect of a certain type of schooling upon young children's skill in manipulating number combinations, for example, may not be thought as important as its effect upon their mental or physical health; factors which influence children's neatness in handwriting or their ability to cook or do woodwork are not of the same value as those which concern their social and emotional development. One must place the many different phases of child development in some sort of order of significance—a task of some nicety, that will inevitably be done in different ways by people who differ in their educational philosophies.

At the same time, an investigator must try to be objective in his fact-finding and in his analysis, and it would be well to state at the outset what I consider is demanded in a research of the kind reported here. In the first place we must remember that the very choice of criteria can hardly fail to be influenced by the judgments one makes about the value of different aspects of a child's growth. Hence it is essential for anyone studying consolidation (or, for that matter, any educational problem) to be on his guard lest, while looking only at those parts of the educational process which he himself deems worthy of careful scrutiny, he fail to notice some things that other people regard as important. I have tried to take heed of all the points that have at any time been thought relevant, and to obtain information that would throw light on each one of them. In the second place, it is necessary to be as accurate and objective as possible in gathering the facts and in presenting the relevant data bearing on the selected criteria. The aim of objectivity in this latter case is to make sure that the correct facts are found in respect of each criterion.

Finally, when the evidence has been laid before the reader there is a further step to be taken, presenting more and subtler hazards than mere fact-finding: namely, to give each

fact its due weight so that practical decisions on educational policy may be wisely made. Some readers may think it inappropriate that I should follow up the factual analysis with an evaluation which must inevitably be somewhat personal. But one who undertakes research may be expected to consider and take some responsibility for the practical implications of his study. As a safeguard against misplaced bias one should try to distinguish as carefully as possible between the objective findings and the subjective evaluation of them, so that the reader will be in no way prevented from judging the practical issues for himself on the basis of the evidence presented and in the light of his own values. In my own conclusions I have tried to reduce to a minimum the purely personal element, and have endeavoured to think in terms of what appears to be the consensus of opinion on educational aims among the most influential educational thinkers of today. I have tried to say, in effect, 'These are what modern educationists in general consider to be valid aims of education; in the light of these aims and of the evidence presented I give the following verdict on the problem of consolidation.'

MESTON TRAINING COLLEGE
MADRAS

The School and Its Children

BEFORE reviewing one by one the many topics that have to be considered in this study of the education of country children, it may be useful for the reader to visualize a pair of schools of contrasting kinds. With a concrete picture in mind he may find it easier to follow the detailed analysis that comes later. Let us then, in imagination, visit a sole-charge school and a consolidated school of moderate size and see some of the things that would be obvious on a cursory visit.

The country road over which we have been travelling for some time, seeing only a farmhouse here and there, begins to show signs of closer settlement. Three or four dwellings have appeared within the last half-mile, and we have come to a store which bears the sign 'Post Office' Next to it is a barnlike corrugated-iron hall, the district's memorial to those who fell in the first World War. Further on still, a few chains past the hall, is a wooden church, 'colonial gothic', with grass growing long in the wire-fenced grounds. Almost opposite, surrounded by macrocarpa hedges, is a wooden school, with but one room and an entrance porch, and next to it the teacher's residence. A few more houses, then the open road stretches empty ahead. Nothing stirs in the neatly mowed though far from level school grounds, but as there is the sound of blackboard easels being dragged round indoors the teacher must be preparing for the day's work. Along the road from both directions children are coming into sight. Close at hand three or four boys and girls, one a very tiny child, the others between eight and twelve years old, walk

along together kicking stones, swinging school bags, and chattering. In the distance another group appears riding bicycles, and from the opposite direction children are walking alongside a horse which carries a big boy of thirteen with a five-year-old clinging on behind. In twos and threes they stamp into the porch, take off their oilskins and gumboots, wet from a recent shower, and go into school. Busily and without directions from anyone they are getting things ready for the day's work—filling inkpots, arranging flowers, taking exercise-books from cupboards, opening up the piano, chatting among themselves and to the teacher as they work. Soon one of them rings a handbell, and all line up outside. We can now see the whole school—two five-year-olds, three seven-year-olds, three each of eights, nines, and tens, four eleven-year-olds, two twelve-year-olds, and one of thirteen: in all nine boys and twelve girls. They march in two by two, smallest first, and go to their places—single tables and chairs of different sizes arranged in four groups: Primers (5), Standards 1 and 2 (6), Standards 3 and 4 (6), and Forms I and II (4). They sing a few songs together—nursery rhymes for the particular benefit of the five infants, and a two-part English folk-song nobly attempted by all but kept going by the older children. Then all draw their chairs into a circle for the 'morning talk'. One of the infants tells about the doings of some pets, and the biggest of the boys, the thirteen-year-old, proudly shows a model motor boat he has recently been given, and explains how the propeller works. After the talks are over all children return to their own groups and start work at once on their various assignments of arithmetic—the younger infants arranging beads and blocks in number patterns, the older infants testing each other's knowledge of some of the addition combinations, the children in the standards working from their textbooks. The teacher moves round from group to group giving help where he knows it is needed.

After arithmetic comes spelling, and then playtime. Out in the playground all the children, big ones and little ones

together, are playing 'Bar the Door' while the teacher goes over to his house to have a cup of morning tea with his wife. When school goes in again it is reading time—silent reading for the older children from the *School Journal* or from the little store of library books, the preparation of a short play by Standards 1 and 2, and, for the infants, reading aloud to the teacher. Reading may be followed by English grammar or composition, and then physical education until lunch-time.

In the afternoon, the middle and upper standards spend a double period this day working in twos and threes on a social-studies 'project' ('Life in an Ancient Maori Village'). The younger children have a history story read to them by the teacher, and then make blackboard drawings to illustrate it. After playtime the older children go out working in the gardens, and the younger ones have a nature-study lesson indoors. So the day passes, until it is time for the children to return as they came, in twos and threes, on foot, bicycle, or horseback, down the quiet country road to their homes.

Let us now take a brief glance at a consolidated school. It will not be so easy to choose a typical one for, as we have already seen, there are very many different kinds, and the range of social environments in which they are found is wide indeed. However we shall choose one that is not in any way very unusual. It stands in a small country township of some three hundred people. The township itself, lying in a small river plain, has one main street with about a dozen shops, a garage, a hotel, two churches, and a memorial hall. The railway runs through the town alongside the main street, and the school is at the boundary where the houses of the town end and the saleyards mark the beginning of the open country. An old stone building of three rooms houses the middle and upper standards, and a modern block of four open-air classrooms and a staffroom is used by the infants and junior standards.

When we reach the school in the morning children are already playing in the grounds—infants on a lawn near their

rooms, bigger boys on the football ground, and bigger girls at the basketball field. These are the township children and some other pupils who have arrived by train. At five minutes past nine three school buses arrive and unload ninety or a hundred children who rush their schoolbags into the classrooms and return quickly to snatch a few moments' play before the last two buses arrive from longer routes. By ten past nine all are here, and at nine-fifteen the bell rings and the children line up. Music is relayed through a loud-speaker system, and about two hundred and fifty children with their seven teachers march into the classrooms. Inside any one of these the day's work is similar in many ways to what we saw in the one-room school, but the organization of the work is very different indeed. In the upper school each teacher, including the headmaster, has just one standard in his room —thirty to forty boys and girls most of whom are within a year of the average age of the class. They sit at single tables or dual desks, all the same size and arranged in parallel rows facing the teacher's table.

Let us follow the work of, say, Standard 3. 'Morning talks' may begin the day, and they will differ from those in the sole-charge school by being more closely pitched to the level of maturity of all the listeners and by evoking more lively discussion, for there are very many pupils able to question the speakers pertinently. Arithmetic follows. The teacher gives an oral lesson on a new process, and the class begins to work out examples from the same exercise in the textbook. Those who are slow to grasp the principle are given individual help by the teacher; but the brighter ones finish before the end of the period and go on preparing 'project work', or reading. Next, the whole class is given a spelling test, based upon a list of words (Schonell's) copied into their spelling notebooks the previous day. Milk bottles now rattle in the corridors; the milk monitors bring in a crate and distribute bottles and straws. After milk comes playtime. Playtime here is very different from what it is in the one-teacher school. The age groups are separated to some extent into different

parts of the grounds—infants and juniors playing in twos and threes, boys and girls together, while the upper standards, boys and girls separately, are playing team games. Throughout the rest of the day the subjects are still much the same as in the one-room school but each class tends to work as a unit. In the standards the teachers can give little individual attention to most of their pupils, and the classes are not broken up into smaller permanent sections, though for certain activities such as social-studies investigations small working groups may frequently be formed. In each of the two infant rooms, however, two such sections are found, the pupils in one differing from those in the next by roughly half a year in attainment.

At three-fifteen the school empties, five lines of children parade by the waiting buses and embark at a given signal. They depart, leaving the township children by themselves again to finish the school day with a few more games before they collect the mail and do some shopping on their way home.

So much, at least, is obvious to a casual observer; and even a glance at a few small schools and larger consolidated schools takes in some of the characteristic features which may be presumed to produce different educational results. The number of friends a child can have will be less in the smaller than in the larger school; the influence of a few children on one another and the influence of one teacher on his children will no doubt be more intense; order will be less formal; games will take on a homelike rather than a typical school-like appearance—these are some of the obvious things. To sum up the whole of the educational process, however, one must probe further. One could well begin by looking at the formal school studies themselves.

Scholastic Attainment

The scope of the curriculum. The curriculum of every public primary school is based on the official syllabuses issued by the Education Department. One would expect, therefore,

that there would be considerable uniformity in the 'schemes of work' drawn up by the teachers to guide them in their daily work; and this in fact is the case. Some uniformity has always been deliberately sought in order to ensure adequate standards of work throughout the country, in small school and large school alike; and in the present century the conditions of training, certification, payment, and promotion of teachers have created a unified service, circulating freely throughout New Zealand, and have reduced the influence of locality and local administration on the curriculum. On the other hand, the Education Department has in recent years encouraged teachers to adapt the basic syllabuses to local conditions and to modify them in such a way as to make the best use of their own particular interests and abilities. One would expect to find, therefore, over and above the basic uniformity, considerable differences from district to district and between rural and urban schools in the general treatment of subjects like the social studies and nature study, and occasionally marked differences from class to class in the way particular teachers developed their particular interests. Within any one district, however, one would not expect to find any great differences resulting from adaptations of the curriculum to the immediate environment or any sharp line of demarcation between the small schools and the larger ones.

A careful examination of teachers' schemes of work in many schools showed that it would, in fact, seldom be possible to tell from the contents whether a particular scheme belonged to the one type of school or the other. In the one- and two- teacher schools, it is true, the topics to be dealt with in nature study, social studies, art, and music were usually set out in two-year cycles, because two standards commonly work together in these subjects, but apart from such matters of arrangement no major differences could be seen between the schemes in these schools and in the largest schools in the same districts.

From small school to small school, however, and from classroom to classroom in the large schools, the effects of

differing interests on the part of the teachers could be clearly discerned, especially in the appreciative studies such as music. Whether or not a full course in musical appreciation, for example, was carefully elaborated in the scheme of work depended almost wholly upon the individual teacher concerned. This was true, too, of literature and art. Though the separate schemes for each class showed no consistent differences, the fact that several teachers in a large school would usually have worked out rather fully the particular subjects that interested them, created a cumulative effect of richness that was not found in any single scheme in a small school. Whether in fact these special interests of individual teachers greatly affected the education of the children in classes other than their own depended on the extent to which some form of staff specialization was encouraged. This matter will be dealt with more fully later. Here it is enough to note that in two-teacher schools which had a headmaster and a woman assistant it was usual for the latter to be responsible for the schemes of work in music for the whole school, and in many of the larger schools some of the assistants helped to plan the work in their special subjects for other classes than their own.

Schemes of work, however, can never do more than outline very briefly the content of the various subjects; alone, they do not enable us to make a reliable estimate of the effective life of the school. They give, nevertheless, a useful indication of the scope and nature of the curriculum, and it is an important fact, relevant to the problems with which this study is concerned, that even the one- and two-teacher schools work to plans that are basically similar to those found in the larger ones.

Organizing the work of the classroom. Since 1878 the curriculum of public primary schools has been set out in terms of 'standards'. The Wellington Education Board appears to have been the first to introduce this practice into the colony in 1874, when four standards, covering eight years' work, were

drawn up by its inspector of schools. In 1875 six one-year standards were drawn up for the Canterbury Education Board by its secretary, the Rev. W. J. Habens, and these became the basis of the Education Department's scheme of 1878. The word 'standard' has changed its meaning somewhat as time has passed. At first it referred to certain specified levels of attainment reached by individual children. In the report of the chairman of the Wellington Education Board for 1877 we read, 'The standards have worked well; they have been most useful in classifying the scholars, in securing work of a better order, in directing teachers to a more profitable employment of time, and in testing the instruction more accurately than could have been done by any system of class examination.'[1] Soon, however, as it was the practice to put together in one classroom those children who had reached the same level of attainment, the word 'standard' came to be used of organization and came to mean 'classroom group' 'What standard are you in?' is now the usual expression, not 'What standard have you reached?' When this mode of thinking was carried over to the small school it set some very difficult problems. How could one person teach several classes of children different courses of work? The most usual ways of attempting to solve the problem were either to individualize the work and have separate textbooks for the children of each standard, or to group classes and alternate the yearly syllabuses.

The first way can be illustrated by taking a well-known example from a particular period. In the nineteen-twenties and thirties there were in common use textbooks in arithmetic, English, history, and geography, based upon the Education Department's syllabus of instruction for primary schools and following very closely, section by section, the prescriptions for the different standards. Many teachers will remember *Our Nation's Story*, the *Pacific Geographies*, the *Human Geography* series, Whitcombe's *Progressive English Course* and *Progressive Arithmetic*, and many will know that it was a common practice

[1] *A. to J.* H-1 1878, 38.

in one- and two-teacher schools for the children in each standard to study the appropriate textbooks individually. In this way the Department's syllabus of instruction for each standard was systematically worked through and the prescriptions for the different standards were taken in the proper sequence. Good readers became painstaking students; but when pupils were below average in intelligence and were backward in reading grave difficulties arose, and the methods used to get such children to learn by heart, often uncomprehending, the salient topics outlined in the syllabuses would be frowned on today. Lacking a wide range of good books or pictorial material and working under conditions which virtually prevented him from giving many stimulating oral lessons, the teacher all too often was compelled to reduce the content of geography, history, literature, and nature study to a desiccated skeleton.

The individual approach can be appropriately used for the elements of subjects like reading, writing, and arithmetic, in which individual practice can bring mastery, and certain features of the small school favour the effective development of the basic skills. By having children of many ages in the one room the teacher is prevented from trying to bring them all up to one average standard and from attempting to instruct all together. He is forced to recognize that the skills will develop at their own rates in different children, and that he may have to help each child in a rather different way. Moreover, as he will usually have fewer children to teach than his colleagues in a large school, he will find it much easier to give each child some individual attention.

In the broader studies, however, the emphasis has gradually shifted in recent years rather to the social aspects of learning. Group investigation and discussion now play an important part, for many values inherent in school studies are thought to be unattainable simply by the individual learning of ready-made lots of subject matter. The larger schools have an advantage here, for each teacher has a class of children who are much more similar in ability and experience than

are the pupils of the one- or two-teacher school. To encourage social learning and to provide for class teaching the small school usually groups together the children of two or more standards (e.g. 3 and 4, or 5 and 6) and in alternate years covers the prescribed syllabuses for each standard. The value of such a method is that halving the number of groups enables the teacher to give more oral lessons and to arrange discussions and other group activities with greater ease. There are, however, serious difficulties in this alternation method of planning a curriculum. The sequence of the yearly prescriptions is broken, and where the syllabus is carefully laid out as a progressing course the learner may not be able to make the pieces fall into their proper order. Furthermore, if there is a real gradation in the difficulty of the syllabuses from year to year, their rearrangement makes it hard for those children who happen to be in the standard lower than the one whose syllabus is being taken, and in the following year may cause the children in the higher standard to lose interest. In a subject like arithmetic, we may note, this kind of alternation rarely if ever occurs, for here it is very obvious to the teacher that each year's work, in the elementary stages at least, is built up directly upon what has gone before. In other subjects the same problems occur whenever syllabuses are planned in strict sequence.

But the more obvious difficulties that arise when we assume that the curriculum must be arranged as a fixed sequence of detailed lots of subject matter can be very largely avoided if it is realized that there are other methods available, some of which, indeed, are specially suitable for primary school children. One way is to plan parallel courses for each of two or more years in such a way that no one of them leans heavily on prior knowledge of the others. This is already a very common practice in nature study and social studies in the small school, and it can readily be applied to other subjects also. Not even mathematics is so strictly sequential that parallel courses could not be worked out in many parts of it. Another method is to arrange the curriculum

in 'activity units' or 'projects' that can be carried out by groups of children of different ages and classes. Exact sequence, after all, is relevant mainly to the details of the topics studied; the main themes can be largely independent.[2] Thus, in social studies, a main theme for one year, 'services provided by the post office, the bank, the store, the school, the library, the roads, and the railways', could alternate very easily with a unit concerning 'work done by the farmer, the builder, the grocer, the postmaster, the truck driver, and the factory worker.'

In spite of their difficulties composite classes have advantages too. Grouping two or more classes together and planning two- or three-year cycles of work in certain subjects help to ensure continuity in the curriculum. I found that in the small schools the studies of any one year tended to be much more closely related to those of the years that came before and after them than was the case in the larger schools, where the yearly schemes of work were drawn up separately by the different teachers. Even when the larger schools had well-planned, comprehensive master schemes, and where the schemes for the different standards had been carefully elaborated from sections of the master scheme, the fact that these sections were prepared and used by different teachers made continuity hard to attain. Each year's plan tended to be self-contained and was treated as an isolated unit. In those schools which did not have very detailed master syllabuses the work suffered on the one hand from wasteful overlapping and repetitious treatment of the same themes by successive teachers and on the other from gaps in the content of the different subjects.

It is unfortunate when studies are disrupted in this manner. Not only does continuity help to ensure that the child's knowledge grows steadily broader and deeper, but it does away with those wasted passages of time when a new teacher

[2] Valuable suggestions on such methods will be found in the following publications of the Department of Rural Education, National Education Association of the United States, Washington D.C.: *Organization of Curriculum for One-Teacher Schools*, 1933; *Newer Types of Instruction in Small Rural Schools*, 1938.

is trying to find out what his pupils know and where he must begin to build. One of the most distressing things about continual changing of teachers is the constant interruption of learning. In most cases there is no doubt that the small schools have an advantage in this matter. Though, on the average, the length of time that teachers remain in them is much the same as that spent in any one position by the majority of assistants in the larger schools, the former usually teach the same children for more than one year; but it is only occasionally that large schools place a group of children under one teacher for several years running. At this point we may well turn our attention to methods of classification.

Classification. One of the advantages frequently claimed for the larger schools is that they are able to classify their pupils more efficiently. The report of the Minister of Education for 1938, in a passage which refers to the value of consolidation, states, 'These increased facilities include better classification of pupils'.[3] Though not using quite these terms C. E. Beeby was also referring to classification when, in the same year he wrote that the intermediate school could 'offer all the advantages of consolidation', important among which was ability grouping.[4] Classification, indeed, has presented teachers in the small schools with difficult problems ever since the introduction of 'standards', and one of the constant complaints to be found in the inspectors' reports of an earlier day is that rural teachers have improperly classified their pupils. On the other hand it was frequently stated that one of the virtues of the large schools with their 'more effective teaching power' was to be found in the improved classification of their children.

Like the word 'standard' the term 'classification' has changed somewhat in meaning over the years. As originally used it referred to the act of deciding or the method of

[3] *A. to J.* E-1 1938, 8.
[4] C. E. Beeby, *The Intermediate Schools of New Zealand,* 209. Wellington 1938.

indicating what standard an individual child had reached in the various subjects of the school curriculum. 'Every child', we read, 'is individually examined and classed'.[5] Only later did the term classification, putting children into classes, come to assume the derivative meaning of putting them into classrooms. In considering the relevance of classification in a discussion of consolidation we need to keep the two connotations of the word separate.

First, there is no doubt that teachers in the small school have always had great difficulty in accurately assessing the scholastic level of their pupils. With only one or two children in any given age group it is not possible for teachers to make enough comparisons of child with child for them to learn to judge with some confidence what achievement can be regarded as satisfactory in the work of a given standard. There is little doubt, too, that in the days when promotion from class to class was strictly determined by scholastic achievement many children were promoted in the smaller country schools who would have failed in the large town schools. Unless some sort of standardized tests with adequate norms are available it would be hard for even an experienced teacher to keep his judgment clear on such matters when he teaches but a handful of children who may vary greatly in intelligence and attainments from year to year. That this aspect of the rural teacher's work no longer receives the criticism it once did is probably due in no small measure to the change in promotion policy which has occurred over the past twenty years. In most schools today the 'standard' a child is placed in is decided less by the 'standard' he has reached in school subjects than by his age and his all-round level of physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development.

Secondly, though the term classification in its earlier meaning has lost a great deal of its relevance, in its later meaning this is far from being the case. The points at issue now would seem to be these: whether the 'straight' class

[5] *A. to J.* H-1 1878, 38.

is a more effective educational instrument than the heterogeneous 'composite' class; and whether the more or less homogeneous composite class found in some large schools which have adopted ability grouping is better than either.

These questions cannot be finally answered at this point for they are complex, and a decision depends upon evidence from several of the sections which follow. Here it is enough to make some general observations. In the first place, any advantages that heterogeneous composite grouping may have, can be attained in the large school if it is so desired; they are not restricted to the small school. There is nothing to stop the former from dispensing with the usual straight classes in order to build up working groups of children of different ages who can be placed with one teacher for two or three years if such a method is thought to be of value. The larger school, too, can organize without great difficulty some method of streaming, with homogeneous composite classes. It is clear then that the larger schools are free to choose several methods of classification.

While straight classes are still generally preferred in the large schools, it is probably true that a greater attention to individual differences in children's natures and abilities is found in composite classes. This may be seen by direct observation of the work being done, but it is also indicated by the easier adjustment of difficult pupils and the less restrictive discipline which generally seems possible. It may be said that the teacher in a straight class can adopt a method of grouping within the class in order to take cognizance of individual differences in learning ability. This is true, though here again one must admit that such grouping is seldom carried out in a sustained manner; and it is often grouping in name only. No half measures are possible in a composite class, however; there, the teacher is not under the constant temptation to forget the differences among the groups and to relapse into mass teaching. The opinion is often stated, too, that there are certain advantages in having children of mixed ages in one classroom with one teacher, provided

that there are enough children of any one age to make it possible for them to form normal classroom friendships with their contemporaries. A mixture of ages, it is said, gives scope for much mutual help and enables both teacher and children to observe from their own experience the growing and learning process in a natural perspective. On the other hand, as we have seen, it is easier for the teacher to gain a knowledge of what can be expected of children, on the average, if he has had the chance to teach fairly large classes all of one age; and there is no doubt that the burden of preparation and correction of the pupils' work is greater in a composite than in a straight class, unless the composite class has a relatively small number of children in it, say, not more than twenty-four.

As yet it is not possible to make a conclusive statement on the relatively homogeneous composite classes formed by streaming. Arguments in their favour have often been based on oversea experience, together with observations made in a few New Zealand primary schools,[6] but there are still not enough permanent arrangements of this sort in this country to enable reliable long-term studies to be carried out. For my part I still consider such streamed composite classes better than either straight classes or composite classes of mixed ability, but I must admit that this opinion is based upon observation and impression and discussion with teachers, rather than upon any body of objective measurements. In certain circumstances, too, a strong case can be made for having both straight classes and composite classes in the one school. In either case the larger school has a potential advantage in this matter of classification simply because it is in a position to choose whichever method should be most appropriate to the ends it has in view at any given time.

The basic skills. In most of the one- and two-teacher schools I have seen, the fundamental subjects of reading, writing,

[6] See, for example, R. Winterbourn, *Educating Backward Children in New Zealand*, Ch. 17. Wellington 1944; and G. W. Parkyn, *Children of High Intelligence*, Ch. 9. Wellington 1948.

spelling, composition, and arithmetic, appear to have been taught in much the same way and with about the same sort of success as in the large schools. By using standard textbooks where these are suitable and by setting each child to work at his own pace, with individual help whenever it is needed, the competent sole-teacher with fewer children to look after is, indeed, in rather a better position to see that each child masters the fundamental skills than his colleague in the crowded classroom of a city school. It is true that the young teacher and the inexperienced teacher in small schools find the organizing of such learning groups one of their main sources of difficulty, and, until they have learned to plan their own time economically so that each child gets the help he needs, the work of their pupils may be unsystematic and far from satisfactory. The average teacher, however, usually overcomes such difficulties in his first two or three years, and there are not many small schools today which do not provide for the routine work of the basic subjects as effectively as do the large schools.

This statement may surprise some readers, particularly those overseas, as in the past it has often been said that the country schools were not able to give such efficient instruction as were the town schools. The reports of the inspectors of schools and those of the Minister of Education have made frequent reference over the years to the greater efficiency to be found in the larger schools.[7] Actual comparisons of comparable groups of children were seldom published, however, though no doubt examples could fairly easily have been found to justify such reports. Giving evidence before the Parliamentary Recess Education Committee on Educational Reorganization in New Zealand the headmaster of Piopio consolidated school, R. S. Webster, stated that before consolidation had occurred the number of children in his district gaining Standard 6 Proficiency Certificate was only half that in the years immediately after consolidation.[8]

[7] e.g. *A. to J.* E-1 1926, 5; E-2 1939, 27.

[8] Parliamentary Recess Education Committee, report on *Educational Reorganization in New Zealand*, 25-6. Wellington 1930.

But such evidence is far from unequivocal: one would need to know much more about the fairness of the external examination to the child from a remote settlement, sitting in a strange and strangely crowded classroom in a strange school where he had been taken for the first time in his life that very morning to undergo the crucial test, before one could infer from his failure that he had been inefficiently instructed in his own school.

A useful survey, which throws much light upon the matter, was made in 1948 by a group of teachers in Southland. Certain of Ballard's tests in mechanical arithmetic[9] were given to some 4,000 children from Standard 3 to Form II in a sample of 100 schools of all sorts, from the smallest sole-charge to a large intermediate school, and specially constructed tests were given to about 2,000 children in Standards 1 and 2. This very wide sampling included more than 80 per cent of the children in these classes in Southland. Some of the results have been already published,[10] and through the courtesy of the committee I was able to make a further analysis of the data in order to compare more closely the results in the various grades of school. There was only one consistent difference to be found: children in schools with seven or more teachers did somewhat better work in all processes, and especially in the highest standard. As for the smaller schools, whether in township or in the open country, whether with one teacher or with six, they showed no consistent differences. Most of the differences in the mean scores from one kind of school to another were too small to be statistically reliable; the reliable differences were in the main so small as to be educationally negligible and did not occur in any regular pattern.

In interpreting such results we have to take into account probable differences in the level of general intelligence of the pupils in the different types of school. In the 1936

[9] P. B. Ballard, *Mental Tests*, 161-5. London 1921.

[10] 'Mechanical Arithmetic Survey in Southland', *National Education*, February 1949, 16-7.

survey of New Zealand schools, on the results of which the Otis Self-Administering Test of Mental Ability was standardized, it was found that there were marked and consistent differences between the children in rural districts, townships, and cities.[11] The difference between rural children and city children was found to be equivalent to about three-quarters of a year in intelligence test score. This is approximately the difference found in the results reported above between the city and town schools and those in the open country or in the townships. Except in Form II, both kinds of school may be regarded as achieving equal success. On the other hand, though there was no consistent difference in arithmetic between rural and township schools it is likely that in a thoroughly representative sampling such as this Southland one the children in the rural schools would have had an intelligence score perhaps as much as three points lower than the children in the townships. If this were so the children in the one- and two-teacher schools did somewhat better than might have been expected, and the medium-sized schools somewhat worse.

As has been already pointed out, however, this general sampling method is not entirely suitable in a study of consolidation. Specific investigations were therefore made in certain places where both consolidated schools and small country schools could be studied. Here is a summary of the results from one such district, chosen because the consolidation there showed no extreme features and because schools of many different types were represented. The tests used for children in Standards 3 and 4 and in Forms I and II were prepared by the Australian Council for Educational Research for its curriculum survey of 1946. They comprised three reading tests (knowledge of words, speed of silent reading, comprehension of graded passages) and four arithmetic tests (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of whole numbers). Other tests in reading were given to children of

[11] Mary Redmond and F. R. J. Davies, *The Standardization of Two Intelligence Tests*, 55-8. Wellington 1940.

the lower standards and to the second-year infants—a silent reading comprehension test for Standards 1 and 2, and a modification of Burt's oral vocabulary test for the infants. Altogether, over 800 children were tested.

Verbal intelligence tests were also given to the middle and upper standards, for we know that there are considerable variations in general intelligence from school to school and from class to class within any one school which have to be taken into account when comparing the children's attainments within a fairly small district. In this case, furthermore, differences were found between the average intelligence of pupils in the small schools and that of the consolidated schools, which complicated the position. The most important differences were these. The Form I and II children in the consolidated schools had an average Intelligence Quotient very close to the New Zealand mean, but the Form II children in the small schools averaged about 8 points above this, and the Form I pupils were an almost equal distance below. (The tests used were Otis Self-Administering Tests of Mental Ability, Intermediate Form B.) The difference between the rural Forms I and II for that year was exceptionally great. Standards 3 and 4 in the consolidated school, on the other hand, came about 7 points above the mean and the rural Standards 3 and 4 were respectively 1 and 2 points above. In the face of such variations—which are likely to occur in a quite unpredictable way in a small district in any one year and from year to year—it is impossible to place much reliance on comparisons between schools and classes unless the intellectual level of each of the groups compared is known. The usual estimates made by teachers and inspectors, of the scholastic attainment found in different schools, while doubtless accurate enough in themselves, are for this reason of little value as an indication of differences in the quality of teaching or in the intrinsic worth of different types of school.

A summary of the results for the upper and middle standards is given in the accompanying Table.

MEAN SCORES IN A.C.E.R. SCHOLASTIC ATTAINMENT TESTS

	IQ	READING			ARITHMETIC			
	Otis Inter.	*Vocab.*	*Com-pre.*	*Speed*	*Add.*	*Sub.*	*Mul.*	*Div.*
Consolidated Form II	101	50*	38	22*	45*	49*	33*	35*
Small Schools Form II	109	52	42	24	44	42	35	37
Difference	—8	*—2*	—4	*—2*	*+1*	+7	*—2*	*—2*
Consolidated Form I	104	40	34	19	43	45	33	32
Small Schools Form I	93	30	25	15	41*	35	31*	26
Difference	+11	+10	+9	+4	*+2*	+10	*+2*	+6
Consolidated St. 4	107	33	30	17	38	41	31	26
Small Schools Std. 4	102	29	22	12	38*	33	30*	26*
Difference	+5	+4	+8	+5	0	+8	*+1*	0
Consolidated Std. 3	107	21	19	9	28	26	25	17
Small Schools Std. 3	101	21*	19*	11*	31*	27*	23*	17*
Difference	+6	0	0	*—2*	*—3*	*—1*	+2	0

NOTES: (a) Differences printed in italics are not statistically significant.
(b) An asterisk indicates that if the IQ difference is taken into account the marked group probably has an advantage.

It will be seen that few of the differences are large, and that more than two-thirds are not statistically significant (at the 5 per cent level, using the 't' statistic). However, when we take into account the variation in intelligence level from group to group in this particular sample we can perceive some real differences that otherwise might remain obscured: in the higher standards the consolidated schools did somewhat better, while in the middle standards the small classes took the lead. This trend was most marked in the reading skills. In arithmetic, on the other hand the small schools tended to have an advantage in all classes except Form II.

In Standard 2 the consolidated school children were markedly

superior in comprehension; while the second-year infants of the consolidated school were slightly ahead in the reading vocabulary test. For these children, however, no intelligence test scores were available, and the results cannot be accurately interpreted.

These results come from comparing similar classes in the different schools. When this means of comparison is used, however, differing policies of promotion may hide true differences between the standard of work done in the different schools. For example, if certain schools retarded some of their duller pupils consistently they might easily show higher class-averages in the different subjects than would those schools which promoted their children steadily from year to year mainly on the basis of age and social development. An appropriate question, then, is whether children who are of the same age and who have been at school the same length of time are equal in attainments. An analysis of the attainments of similar age groups showed, however, no tendencies different from those already reported.

The differences that were found in this sample deserve a comment. Anticipating somewhat matters that will be discussed in a later section I should like to point out here what seem to me to be the reasons for them. The reading experience of the very young children was clearly less rich and varied in most of the smaller schools than in the large ones. While the same basic equipment of books and the same formal lessons in the reading skills were to be found in both, in the larger schools reading was, in addition, much more a social activity, shared by pupils whose tastes were congenial, and it led more often to group discussion and appreciation. Under such conditions a greater stimulus to careful reading and reporting is likely to be found, which may well increase children's scores on reading tests. In arithmetic, on the other hand, most of the small schools had thoroughly individualized the practising of the fundamental processes. In many cases they provided their pupils with plenty of well-graded, self-correcting exercise cards for daily use, and

they more often kept up a daily routine of addition and multiplication 'tables' right through the school. With a relatively poorer development of broader activities in the infant departments, the smaller schools tended to place more emphasis upon the formal skills.

Tests in composition on a given theme were set in many schools too, and were used as the basis for assessing the children's work in written expression and the use of language, in spelling, and in writing. Taking into account the much greater unreliability that besets the marking of some of these skills, one could not find any important differences between the different groups of schools.

The same standardized tests were administered in two other places where there were neither so many contributory districts nor so many outlying small schools. The number of children tested was nearly 500 in all, and the results did not differ in any important respect from those of the larger survey reported above.

Taking into account all these lines of evidence, therefore, my conclusion would be that, with the possible exception of the highest classes, the small rural school today cannot be said to be significantly inferior to the larger school in teaching the fundamental skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

The broader studies. In social studies, nature study, music, art, handwork, and physical education it is very difficult to compare the children's knowledge, appreciation, or skill from school to school. In such wide fields of study the necessary tools do not exist for making the fine discriminations that would be needed. In some subjects I could observe the children's work and attempt to assess it directly; in others I was able to see only the educational means used by the schools—means such as the methods of teaching, the syllabus of instruction, the equipment and apparatus used, and so on. In this section I shall do no more than comment upon those subjects in which I was able to make some estimate of the quality of the children's work itself.

Art. Most of the consolidated schools had visibly been affected by the vigorous movement in art teaching that has been noteworthy in our primary schools over the past few years. In them one frequently finds the characteristics of a flourishing children's art—liveliness and freedom of expression, naive and intuitively just sense of composition, and the use of whatever medium is available to communicate interesting personal experiences to others of one's own level of maturity. Many of the teachers have clearly succeeded in knitting together classroom communities in which art is playing a significant part in the children's lives. In the small schools the position is different. In the first place, the dependence of the children upon one teacher or two means that their work varies greatly from school to school. Where the teacher is himself interested in recent trends in art teaching something of the quality of the best children's art can be seen emerging; where the teacher has little knowledge or interest one can find a sterile formalism.

Yet even in very good schools something was often lacking which neither the understanding of a sensitive teacher nor the technical help of an itinerant art specialist could supply —the verve and the disciplined growth in expressive power that require a particular climate to foster them. That climate is found most typically in a group of people maturing together near the same level and at about the same rate, who can share and appreciate their experience and discuss their different modes of expression. The one-teacher schools were too small to meet this condition except on odd occasions; and in those two-teacher schools that had only a few pupils over the minimum number entitling them to two teachers there were seldom enough children near one level of development for the stimulus of mutual interest to influence their art expression. While in the best of the small schools there was some fine illustrative work, some competent and even exciting design, and some excellent representational drawing, it was less usual to find children using art as a language for communicating their experience on a deeper and more personal

level than that pertinent to illustrating their social studies notebooks or to designing posters for a tourist resort. The place of art in the older children's lives was restricted by their limited social environment. Though it may be said that the major values of art lie in its being a medium for serious expression of personal experience, only rarely will great achievement be possible if individuals are cut off from the interest and critical appreciation of at least some of their fellows. This is not to say that individual talent cannot grow in solitude, with perhaps the encouragement of an appreciative adult—indeed great talent often does develop in this way; but, by and large, the opinion of those who have led groups of children (and adults) of ordinary capacity towards original expression in art and music seems to be that the sharing of experience with others who are at the same level has important effects upon their powers.

Music. In a slightly different way much the same thing can be said about music. Unison singing of simple melodies can be attractively developed with a small group of children ranging from infants to adolescents; easy two-part songs can also be tried if by a lucky chance the teacher happens to have suitable numbers of children in the different age groups. But to learn songs progressively matched to the increasing technical competence of the children is extremely difficult, if not impossible, except (I would judge) in a school with four or more teachers. The repertoire and the best performance of a graded group of pupils in a large school go far beyond what can be expected of the mixed groups in small schools. The significance of this lies, of course, not in the fact that the one school can 'put on a show' in a way that the other can scarcely hope to rival, but in the fact that the high quality of the public performance in the one case is an indication of the high level of skill that has been reached by each singer taking part, and it is a level that can hardly be attained in schools where there are only one or two pupils of an age together. In musical appreciation, too, the depth

to which the teacher may penetrate, the insight he may help his pupils to gain, and the extent to which critical discussion can take place are seriously restricted when the children differ greatly in age and maturity. Such conditions, moreover, gravely hamper the teacher who is keen to make use of radio lessons in musical appreciation.

What has been said here does not mean that certain of the basic skills of music—tone production, sight reading, breath control, and so on—are not well taught and well learnt in the small school. Up to a point they are; but they have to be restricted to that fairly simple level at which most of the children, young and old, can work together.

One or two of the more remote consolidated schools, fortunate enough to have a spare room, have made arrangements for a music teacher to come to the school daily and to give individual lessons (on the usual private fee-paying basis) to those pupils whose parents wish them to learn to play the piano. Where children can begin during their senior primary years and continue through high school, this provision is an exceedingly valuable contribution that the consolidated school has made to country education. In some other cases, where the school is situated in a fairly large township, the children are allowed to go to private music teachers during school hours. In my opinion, such plans are warmly to be commended. They bring to country children opportunities of extending their education that are too often out of their reach.

Literature. The teaching of literature, whether reading, or reciting, or acting, or discussing, or writing, or whichever of its many aspects one may consider, seems also to reach a higher level in the consolidated schools and even in the three- and four-teacher schools than in the smaller ones. Not that there are no good teachers of literature in the latter; there are; some, indeed, are so good that many other things might gladly be sacrificed so that one's children could come under their influence. But not everything rests with the

teacher, for many valuable aspects of literature depend, as in music and art, upon the existence of a group of people not too dissimilar in their level of maturity and their outlook. Without at least a small group of children who are interested enough to read and write for each other, to act and recite, and to discuss and criticize, the teacher of literature works with imperfect instruments. The group need not be large—six or eight is probably enough—but it must have considerable homogeneity of interest. Even a 'straight' class in a large school will not be able to be treated as one group, but will have to be broken up into several sections on the basis of interest and ability if lively work is to be done. The teacher in a very small school will find it almost impossible to form groups of this kind at all, such is the diversity of age, ability, and interests in his classroom.

Other subjects. In other subjects too, such as physical education and crafts, much the same sort of conclusions emerge. Even with good teaching, suitable material conditions, and proper equipment it is difficult, if not impossible, to ensure a continued gradation of quality and to carry out activities that go beyond the elementary level at which children of widely differing ages can work together. The older children, especially, suffer from a retarded development of the cultural aspects of many school subjects.

Specialization. From early reports concerned with improving rural education in New Zealand we find that the possibility of having specialist teachers in the larger schools for such subjects as music, crafts, and art, was always seen as a potential advantage of the consolidated school. Giving evidence before the Cohen Commission, G. W. C. Macdonald referred to handwork instruction which could not be given in small schools but which could be well provided for in central schools,[12] and G. Dalglish spoke of the 'better opportunities

[12] *A. to J.* E-12 1912, Report of the Education Commission, 212.

afforded for special work in music, drawing, etc.'[13] When consolidation became the policy of the Education Department this argument was frequently found in the reports of the Minister of Education.[14]

Those who have seen a number of schools at work know how great can be the difference in attitude and approach to any subject, in the skill developed, and in the quality of the product, between children who have keen and specially skilled teachers for certain subjects and those whose teachers treat some part of their work with indifference or with lack of knowledge and skill. The variation of quality from school to school in any particular subject can be very great, and, indeed, the quality can vary from room to room within the one school through the differences in teachers on the same staff. With a varied staff the enterprising headteacher is able to arrange things so that the best ability of each teacher may make its influence felt beyond his own classroom: one teacher may supervise the curriculum and the methods of teaching nature study throughout the school; another music, another art. Mutual help can in this way raise the standard of work of the whole staff. Sometimes, too, it may be considered better for those with special interests and qualifications to do a certain amount of teaching in classes other than their own.

Not many of the consolidated schools appear to have made as much use of the special abilities of their teachers as they might, nor for that matter have the ordinary town schools. One can often notice a most uneven development in such things as art, music, handwork, nature study, and social studies, as a child moves up from one standard to the next, and it is far from rare to find that children who in one class have been given a deep interest in, say, nature study see it treated with apathy the following year with a teacher whose interest is perhaps in handwork. Later will come new apathies and new interests to hinder the progressive development of the pupils. In a few schools, however, teachers have been made responsible for supervising those subjects which are

[13] ibid., 423.

[14] For example, *A. to J.* E-1 1938, 8; 1939, 5.

their special interest, whether or not specialist teaching as such has been arranged, and the general quality of the work has been greatly improved. The effect of partial specialization is twofold: not only does it act directly on the classroom work of the children, but it can bring the staff together as a team bent on raising its own level by sharing the abilities of its members. (It is worth noting here that since the greater part of the field work for this survey was carried out the Education Department has been giving a great deal of attention to ways and means of improving the team work of school staffs.)

When we consider the small country schools from this point of view and make a careful examination of the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching we find, as would be expected, rather more variation than in the larger schools. The standard of work in the basic skills does not differ greatly from one kind of school to another; when we look at the broader studies, however, we can see a much greater unevenness in the smaller schools and markedly different strengths and weaknesses. As teachers vary greatly we find that the interests and the broader attainments of the children vary also. In one school over a period of two or three years the sole teacher may make it his aim to raise the standard of reading and appreciation of literature which, perhaps, he found at a low level and in which he takes a keen interest; at the same time he will give less attention to many of the other subjects, and some indeed he may understandably but none the less unfortunately neglect. If, too, we examine the work of one school over a period of years through a succession of teachers we find a similar fluctuation.

Variety has its value, and it is good for any child to find a teacher with a cultivated enthusiasm to which he can respond. Yet the sort of variety that occurs in this fickle and unpredictable way cannot be made a goal of educational policy. A certain balance in the development of our children is generally considered desirable, and at the primary stage at least we try to ensure that growth takes place fairly steadily in many

directions, even when some degree of specialized teaching is introduced. If the special interests and abilities of children are to be given additional encouragement, our general administrative policy would have to be directed towards getting the right children to the right teachers. This should not be left to fortuitous variations in the abilities of teachers. Concretely, if a child in any school has a strong leaning towards art we would want him to have the chance of coming under the influence of a teacher with artistic interests; if the child is in a sole-charge school the chances are that the teacher's special interest will not correspond with his need. One of those things that constantly worry the sensitive sole-teacher is just this impossible situation in which he finds himself when faced with the many undeveloped potentialities of his older pupils. The larger school could provide a range of special abilities in its teachers, and could thus give the talented child a better chance of meeting the teacher he needed.

Learning and teaching. I have already pointed out that it is probably because they use individual methods for teaching the basic skills that teachers in the small schools, in spite of difficulties, are able to bring their children to much the same level of attainment as that which is found in the larger ones, and undoubtedly they have better conditions for doing individual work. But teaching methods have other effects than those specifically concerned with the learning of certain subjects, and some of them must be considered here.

In the larger schools the methods of teaching, even in the formal skills, showed somewhat more variety than was possible in the smaller schools where many teachers continued to use the traditional organization of separate classes for each standard and had to leave their pupils to work on their own for a considerable portion of the day, with the result that most learning was individual desk learning. In the larger schools many social activities were used as the introduction to learning the skills. In arithmetic, practical work in weighing and measuring, buying and selling, and so on

were carried out by groups of children at the same level of development. In language studies similarly, there were opportunities for editing magazines and newspapers and for carrying on discussions and talks. In social studies, groups of children could make first-hand investigations. In nature study, excursions and group projects were arranged. As a result there was generally a keenness of common interest and a liveliness of atmosphere in the classroom markedly different in quality from the more individualistic industry of the one- or two-teacher school.

In passing judgment upon such differences as these one has to tread warily, since there are good points and bad in each situation, and they do not lend themselves easily to comparison. The differences are there, nevertheless, and cannot be ignored. The child in the sole-charge school learns to work industriously on his own, undisturbed by the activities of others around him, in a way that is not so often matched by his fellows in the typical class of a large school. Where individual study is called for, such an ability is clearly a great asset. There are things to be learned in most school subjects, however, that cannot come from solitary hard work, however diligent—for example the ability to feel the music of spoken poetry, to follow the thread of an argument in social studies, or to appreciate the train of thought of a fellow pupil working an arithmetical teaser aloud. Such things, which add greatly to the quality of living, are most difficult to nurture except in an appropriate social environment and with suitable encouragement. In the small school there are seldom enough pupils to form good working groups, and the teacher is seldom able to distribute his time freely and flexibly enough for such wider purposes.

Differences such as these can be readily seen when we observe the infant and junior classes. The varied activities of modern infant rooms are very hard to provide for in the one-room school. Singing, dancing, games, free play, and story telling cannot have more than a very small place in

the school day when they have to be confined to one part of the schoolroom and when they must not be allowed to disturb the desk work of the senior pupils. The younger pupils in the small school that has children from P. 1 to Form II are on the whole receiving a more formal schooling nowadays than are those in the larger schools. Before the recent shift in emphasis in education occurred it was usual for the young sole teacher to be told that he must give a great deal of time to training his infants in the basic skills to make certain that a good standard could be maintained in the higher classes. Under such conditions, the three Rs, formally taught, took up most of the young child's school life. Now, the young teacher is asked to base his teaching of the skills upon occupations natural to little children, and is expected to make provision for story telling, games, singing, dancing, handwork and the other activities that are suited to the needs of the young growing child; but conditions in the one- or two-room school make it next to impossible for him to do all these things well.

Equipment. One of the advantages regularly claimed for consolidation is that large schools can be better and more economically equipped than small schools. 'Better buildings and appliances, school libraries, playgrounds, etc.' were referred to by G. Dalglish before the Cohen Commission,[15] many of the education boards have noted in their reports[16] that better equipment could be provided, and the Department has stated that 'special equipment' would be available.[17]

Seldom has anyone explicitly set out the kinds of equipment referred to, but among the things mentioned from time to time which could come under this head are carefully tended playgrounds, playground apparatus, swimming pools, sports materials, tennis courts, books, libraries, workbenches, tools, gramophones, pianos, radios, motion-picture or film-strip projectors, and assembly halls. The argument, apparently,

[15] *A. to J.* E-12 1912, 423.
[16] *A. to J.* E-2 1927, 36, 40.
[17] *A. to J.* E-1 1929, 14; 1937, 3; 1939, 5.

has been of the following kind. Items of equipment come under the category of 'scarce means' which have to be allocated in such a way that they can be used by the greatest number of people; they should be installed first in large schools, and the others will be served later if it is found that the expense involved can in the end be met. It is certain, then, that at any given time, the smaller schools will be found to be lagging behind.

Whether we think of the facilities provided by the State for its schools or whether we think of things that usually have to be bought with money raised by the voluntary efforts of parents, committeemen, teachers, and pupils there is obvious truth in this line of argument. Those who know from first-hand experience how hard it has been at certain times to raise a few pounds for library books for the country school must often have glanced enviously at the sums raised by the concert or the fête at a city school. It has never been easy, except in favoured localities and in the more prosperous periods, for the small schools to get money, and it needs only a casual glance at the schools themselves to see that much more has been spent on the grounds, amenities, and equipment of the larger ones. When, too, we compare the schools at different periods, from, say, the twenties, when school committees were being asked to find the cost of class sets of 'supplementary readers', to the fifties, when the demand is for motion-picture projectors and 'intercom' systems, we find that the larger schools have tended to lead the way in bringing expensive new equipment to the classroom. The time-lag has been much less apparent over the past ten years, when even the smallest schools have been able to build up their stocks of library books to the hundred mark, and have been able to buy sports gear, radio sets, and in many cases motion-picture projectors.

This general approach to the question does not go to the root of the matter, however. What we really need to know is how relevant these facts are to the daily experience of each child. The casual observer may tend to compare the

total amount of material in different schools without considering its availability to the pupils, yet this after all is the most important thing.

When one looks beneath the surface, doubts arise whether the individual child in the large school gets as much benefit from the money spent as does the child in the small school. Few of the children in a large school can hope to play many games of tennis on the school courts or get many turns with the cricket bat on the school pitch, and school lawns and gardens that have had hundreds of pounds spent on civilizing them are much less valuable as playgrounds than are the rougher ones in the small schools, which give greater scope for adventurous games. Furthermore, when the school piano, gramophone, and motion-picture projector have to be moved from room to room at fixed periods, or when the children have to go at allotted times to the assembly hall to use them, it is impossible for these classroom aids to be used spontaneously and flexibly in the day-to-day teaching.

In the small school there may be just one bat and ball, but there are only a few children to share it; there may be no swimming bath, but there is very often a stream or water hole nearby where the children can learn to swim; there may be no assembly hall, but the one room can be cleared for folk dancing; there may be no woodwork room, but there can be a work-bench and one set of tools; there may be no separate room for the school library, but this may be a real advantage, for the shelves that hold the stock of standard authors, works of reference, and the term's borrowings from the National Library Service are open to every child all day long and can be furnished with several hundred basic volumes at a cost which can hardly be considered prohibitive nowadays; and the radio, the motion-picture projector, and the piano (shared perhaps with the different religious congregations that use the school buildings on Sundays) can all be used at any time that is appropriate.

My general conclusion, from a comparative study of the use made of the equipment, is that children in the small

schools and in the medium-sized schools (those with three to six teachers and up to, say, a hundred and ninety pupils) are in fact by far the best off. The large schools would need to have many times the space, materials, and equipment than even the best of them now have, before their pupils could get anything like the freedom of access to them that is found in the smaller schools. When the thoughtful parent or teacher considers the large consolidated school from this point of view he will probably find little exaggeration in the statement made by G. D. Warring at the 1946 Annual Meeting of the New Zealand Educational Institute when moving that consolidation be investigated: 'In many areas [parents] have been deceived into believing that their children would receive better equipment, better accommodation, Building is hopelessly inadequate, playing space is deplorably small, '[18]

Social Development

Among the advantages claimed for the large school have always been the beneficial effects on social development that arise only when fairly large numbers of children are gathered together. Some of the particular social qualities valued fifty years ago may not appear so attractive today, and on the other hand qualities that we now approve may not then have been held in such high esteem, yet there have always been some claims made for the virtue of congregation.

Witnesses before the Cohen Commission[19] spoke of the 'emulation' and '*esprit de corps*' that entered the schoolroom when many children were gathered together, of the 'widened circle of acquaintance' that would result, of the 'personal culture' that such a widening would bring about; and 'even on the side of morality' improvement was expected. A typical expression of the general view at the time when consolidation had come to be accepted policy will be found in the report of the Auckland Education Board for 1927, which says that 'the corporate spirit engendered among the

[18] *National Education*, 4 June 1946, 181.

[19] *A. to J.* E-12 1912, 280, 423, 473.

children will make for their benefit as citizens of the future.'[20] And in 1939 the Chief Inspector of Primary Schools was able to report that 'advantages from the educational, recreational, and social points of view are becoming so obvious that it is difficult to keep pace with the demand' [for consolidation].[21]

The social climate has changed somewhat in recent years, however, and many people in these days of reaction from mass instruction find a charm in the little country schoolroom with its homelike atmosphere that would hardly have appealed to, say, twenty-year-old Joseph Lancaster when some hundred and fifty years ago he had reached his ambition of controlling one thousand children in one hall, single-handed. For that matter even fifty years ago the homelike country schoolroom did not greatly impress our inspectors of schools. The apparent efficiency and order of masses of children lined up in the large classrooms and playgrounds of the city schools were obviously more in keeping with their educational ideals. Today, however, it is often claimed that one of the virtues of the country school is just its small size, the wide age range of its children, and its continuity, all of which make it an admirable place for developing close personal relationships and which give it the character of a natural social unit like the home. In close contact with the teacher (and his wife) is a mixed group of children of various ages, working and playing together in school and out, and bound together by close ties of community spirit and personal friendship.

The social development of children has many facets which cannot be considered here, important though they are, for this study must be restricted to qualities that are clearly and directly related to the kind of school a child goes to. Two main aspects in particular will be dealt with: the relationships among the pupils themselves and the relationships between the teachers and their pupils.

Children's friendships. It is a fact of common observation that, in the small school, boys and girls of very different ages

[20] *A. to J.* E-2 1927, 26. [21] *A. to J.* E-2 1939, 4.

share the same playing space and play together, while in the larger schools the children of different ages and sexes sort themselves out, or are forcibly sorted out, and play in separate groups or even in separate playgrounds. The influence upon their social development will be somewhat different in the different circumstances. What the differences are, and in what way they are important, needs some consideration.

To get information about the effect of consolidation on the development of friendships a simple questionnaire was given to children from Standard 3 to Form III in a large sampling of schools. The children were asked to name their three closest friends and to give the class and the home address of each. Simple though this approach is, it gives us very precise answers to certain fundamentally important questions, about which, it is true, most people have roughly correct information.

In the small schools there were numerous cases in which children could not put down the names of three friends: there were only one or two children in their school or district with whom they felt any real affinity. In the larger schools, on the other hand, out of some hundreds of pupils not one failed to name three friends; doubtless even if the number asked for had been greater the children would in many cases have been able to provide a full list.

It hardly needs saying that in the former case the same children were named as friends time and time again: anyone's friends were on the whole everyone else's. In the latter case, however, the number of friendship groups was large, and the group pattern changed constantly from child to child in a way that was not possible in the small school. A large majority of the older pupils in the consolidated schools stated that they preferred them to the little schools previously attended; and the main reason they gave for preferring their new school to the old was the wider choice of friends.

Interesting and important differences are found between the kinds of friendship groups which form in the different schools. Throughout the whole age range in the larger school,

children tended to find their friends in the main among their own classmates. In several cases where an exact count was made more than three-quarters of the children had all three of their best friends in their own class. On the other hand in the small schools only about a quarter of the children had all the friends they named in their own class. When such children went to a consolidated school in Form I (as happened in one particular district) the proportion rose at once to one-half. Naturally a large number of their friends in other classes were children who lived in the same district and who travelled on the same bus.

This leads us to consider a further point of some importance, the extent to which friendships are made outside the home district. In the small school there were very few cases of children naming friends who lived beyond the immediate locality of the home and school. When this did happen it was because former residents had recently shifted and the ties of friendship remained, or because a particular child had recently spent a holiday with relatives or friends. In the consolidated schools the situation was much more complex. In the first place, children who lived within the township itself had friends both there and in the districts which surround it. The younger the children the greater the proportion of their friends who lived in the township also. My figures, which may not be fully representative however, show that between the ages of nine and fourteen the number of township children who had all three of their friends also within the township decreased regularly from a half to a quarter. In the second place, rural children who came in to the consolidated school by bus had a very high proportion of their friends living in other parts of the school district. Only about one-eighth had all three friends in their own locality, and over a quarter had all three friends in some other place. Here again, as in the case of the town children, there was a tendency for the older children to have more friends living elsewhere. Such facts as these, simple as they are in themselves, are of some importance both psychologically and

sociologically, and they have no little bearing on the problem of consolidation. The sociological aspects will be discussed in a later section, but here we shall consider the facts simply from the point of view of the individual children.

The value of the small group in the social development of human beings is great. Personal contacts are close, and because there is little possibility of change they last for a long time. In turn the influence of one child on another is greater when acquaintances cannot be made and unmade from day to day. It is often claimed, therefore, that a depth in human relations is fostered under such conditions that is not easily found in the large schools, just as adults cannot so easily find it in the cities as in smaller communities. In particular, the bonds of family responsibility may develop in the small mixed-age school in a way that is not possible elsewhere, and it may become a closely knit social group moved by harmony and affection. There is no doubt at all that in the small school the older children learn to look after the younger in a variety of ways, from helping them with their work indoors to binding up their cuts and scratches in the playground. The young ones, in their turn, come to rely upon the older children for help and guidance in all sorts of matters. This is the valuable side of the kind of social contact that is normal in the small school, and the sense of collective responsibility fostered is good in itself as well as convenient for the teacher in his daily work. The organization can be made to run smoothly with little difficulty, and problems of discipline rarely arise when the atmosphere of a harmonious family is achieved.

It is true, of course, that composite classes of this nature could be organized in the large school if they were thought desirable, and in fact several headmasters have gone some way towards doing so—usually grouping just two or three classes together. But to make complete 'family groups' would be by no means easy. A heterogeneous and almost fortuitously composed group can be fashioned into a pleasant community by a good teacher much more readily in the

small school, and that is indeed one of its advantages. Some teachers have argued that, the world being what it is, it is better for children to learn to get on well with any others with whom their lot is cast than to be able to avoid this by having a choice of companions. There is some truth in this, for the world is a mixed place and we must learn to rub along with people of very different kinds. Yet the contention goes too far. In fact isolation is not really possible in a large school: though children may tend to choose their companions, they and their friends must still fit in with the others in work and play. On the other hand a child can feel so lonely and isolated in a small group of uncongenial spirits that he may find it hard to mix freely in later life.

Moreover, there are other values to be considered as well. The family and the small school (which is analogous to it in certain important respects) have some serious deficiencies as a preparation for living in modern society. For a child's social development to be satisfactory he must, as he gets older, go beyond his family. The family group and the small community do not make it easy for a wide range of personal qualities, traits, interests, and abilities to develop: the social environment of the small community is much less rich than the potentialities of its members, and these potentialities need for their development the wider experiences which can be got only by going beyond its limits. The particular aspect of human life that is relevant here (though not the only one so affected) is social development. The security that a child needs as the basis for leading a healthy, vigorous, and adventurous life is found first of all in the love of his family. But as the youngster grows up and his particular temperament, abilities, and interests begin to mark him out more and more from anyone else he feels the need for congenial companionship on which to build further; and at this stage the love of parents, important though it will remain, needs supplementing by the affection of friends and the esteem of those who share his particular interests. In like manner the undifferentiated friendships of the earlier years,

based on common boyhood or girlhood, are no longer enough to satisfy the growing needs of the child on the verge of adolescence, and he should then be able to choose new friends of various sorts on the basis of their individual qualities rather than of their common humanity.

As MacIver has expressed it, 'sociality and individuality develop together'.[22] The growing child seeks companionship that will be congenial to his own individual nature. This fact can be observed in any large school. Though there may be hundreds of young children playing on the same space of ground they will be found in quite small groups, and though the constitution of these groups changes from time to time certain common features are consistently found: the children play on the whole within the limits of fairly narrow age groups, they are more likely to play with others who are not too distant from them in general intellectual development, and they are brought together also by affinities of temperament and disposition. Such affinities are not necessarily based on similarity. The child who is inclined to be over-anxious and timid may feel the need for friendship with another of a more buoyant and careless nature; and conversely, the carefree may feel the need to look after and encourage a timid class-mate. Such free choosing of friends and companions is greatly limited in a very small community. This is one reason why the older child has to go outside his own family for full development, and it points to a crucial failing of the small school.

One of the values of the school in western society today, where the earlier clan type of family has disappeared, is that it can provide a medium of social development complementary to the home. To do this, however, the school must be rather more than a family: it must be larger, and its principles of organization must differ somewhat from those of the home, even though the essential spirit of a good home should be its spirit also. In providing the means for a broader social development the consolidated school, when moderately large, offers great advantages to the older children.

[22] R. M. MacIver, *Community*, Bk. III, Chap. III, 2nd ed. London 1920.

Child and teacher. A close relationship tends to grow up between teacher and pupil in the small school. There the teacher knows more about each child's abilities, interests, hobbies, ambitions, and circumstances than is possible in a large school; and the child knows more about the teacher. The teacher knows his children better not only in the schoolroom but also in the playground. He may have his pupils for two or more years in succession and will be able to treat them in a more individual way than would be likely in a classroom full of children of about the same age and standard. In the playground each pupil is one of twenty or so, rather than one among hundreds. Furthermore, the teacher knows the child the more intimately since he sees him at home, meets his parents, knows something of their interests, their work, and their difficulties, and usually comes to learn a good deal about the child's history. For his part, the child knows the teacher better, too, not only because he is able to see more of him personally in class and in the playground, but also because he sees him as a member of the community. He perceives that the teacher is a social being: he has his own home nearby, he goes to the local store for supplies and perhaps for the mail, he attends meetings and social gatherings, he has a place in the general life of the settlement, and he even has a wife and children of his own.

All of this means that the child can feel that the teacher is a person much like his own parents and the neighbours. In such circumstances it is probable that closer bonds of sympathy will grow up than in a large school where the child sees the teacher mainly in the classroom and does not know where or how he lives, and the teacher has seldom if ever met the child's parents and may never have seen their home. The influence of the teacher on the child is all the greater when the child appreciates him as a person in this broad way. The influence of the child on the teacher is the greater too, a point that will be dealt with in a later chapter. There is no doubt that one of the most satisfying things in the country teacher's experience is the sense that he is

having an all-round educative effect upon his pupils, and that his influence is not restricted to teaching a few lessons in the classroom and the playground within the six hours of the school day.

Some of the conditions that make this broader influence possible can however be brought about in the large school as well. If it is considered desirable that a teacher should get to know his pupils over a lengthy period he can take them up through the school for several years in succession, a practice that has much to commend it;[23] and if it is considered a good thing for teachers to know the parents and their homes, there is much that they can do to break down their own and their school's isolation. Yet it would still remain difficult for a small child in a large town or city to see the teacher as a member of his community. Unless the teacher was a neighbour he would always be rather remote, a daily visitor to the child's world from an unimagined distant place. Only the older children, who are beginning to see more clearly through the complex social relationships of urban life, can realize that teachers (or, indeed, any workers) have a personal life to live in the community as well as a vocation.

In the close relationship that is found between the country teacher and his pupils there are dangers as well as advantages. If the teacher is a good one his influence will be wholly desirable, at least while the children are young—greater variety of outlook may be needed by older children. When, however, the teacher is a poor one a worse medium of education than the very small school can hardly be imagined. Parents who have resisted consolidation for years have been known to cave in suddenly when their district was unlucky enough to get a really ineffective teacher. This cannot validly be held to be a general argument in favour of consolidation though, for possibly the remedy here is for education authorities to take very great pains to prevent unfortunate appointments in schools as vulnerable as the small ones are.

[23] Edith F. Miller, 'Two years with the same teacher', *Elementary School Journal*, May-June 1949, 531-5.

Games and sports. It will be convenient to consider games and physical recreation here rather than in the section on health, for it is probably in the social even more than in the physical aspects of these activities that the consolidated schools differ most markedly from the smaller schools.

In the latter, sports have to be restricted mainly to games that do not require large teams of evenly matched players, as do football, hockey, and basketball. Children in the lower standards of the primary school, however, do not greatly suffer thereby. Team games, as such, have not yet come to hold the same appeal that they will have in later childhood and in adolescence, and the basic skills of ball-handling, batting, and so on, which have a great attraction, can be well developed in *ad hoc* games even when there are only a few children to play. A bat and a ball and three or four boys and girls are enough to begin cricket with in these early years.

The small school indeed, has something of an advantage in initiating children into the basic skills of those major games which we usually think of as being most appropriate to the large school. The reasons are the same as those discussed in reference to the availability of equipment. When a primary school has as many as three hundred pupils it is still possible to make good provision for rounders, basketball, football, and softball, but it is very hard for every child in the upper standards to get an opportunity to learn to bat and bowl at cricket or to play tennis. Then, at the high school stage, it is only those children who have had encouragement and practice at home who stand much chance of getting into the teams which often are given a prior right to the use of the fields, courts, pitches, and nets. For the younger children it would appear that the best opportunities for being introduced to the major games are to be found in schools that have between, say, 90 and 150 pupils for a school that takes children only up to Standard 4. For children from Form I upwards it is desirable that there should be larger numbers, not only to allow team games to be played properly but also to permit some variety and freedom of choice on

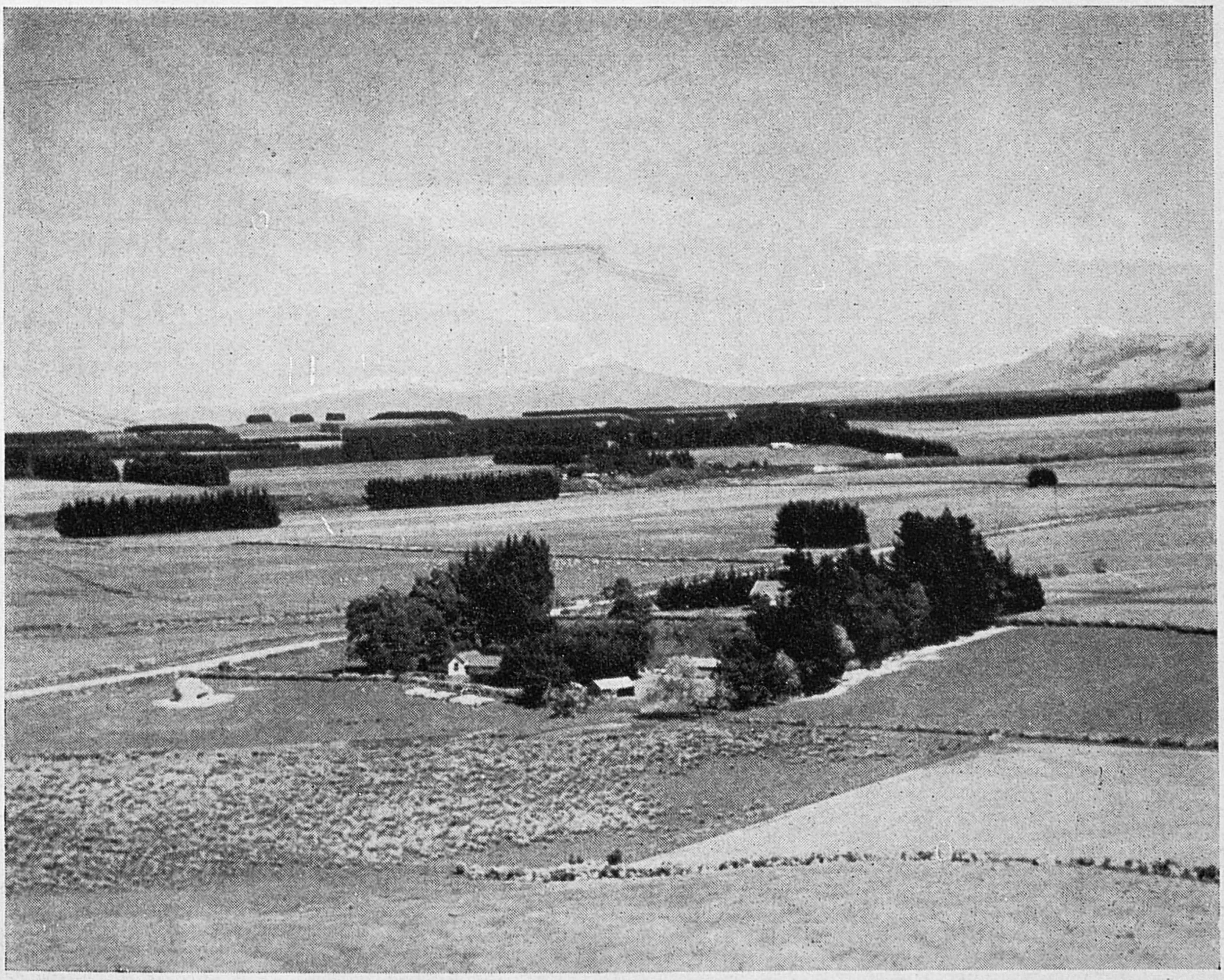
the part of the youngster. A complete primary school, therefore, needs to have more than 120 pupils to be effective, but by 300 it is already too big, in relation to the playing area and facilities it is likely to have, to offer each child enough opportunity to take part in sports without being somewhat arbitrarily restricted to one kind of game in each season.

The consolidated school has its own peculiar difficulties which are mainly due to transport. Those pupils who travel in buses have no time before or after school for the games and sports that most children play, and those pupils who live nearby and stay behind to play after school may find that their teachers are driving buses and can give them no coaching. This is a great loss for the older pupils who are ready for consistent practice in the major team games, and although the number of periods of the normal school week that are devoted to physical education allow of some serious attention to sports, they do not seem to be quite enough. Though such periods are valuable to the older child who, had he still been in his little country school, would have almost entirely missed team games, they are obtained at the cost of giving up those hours of spontaneous play before and after school that they would otherwise have had.

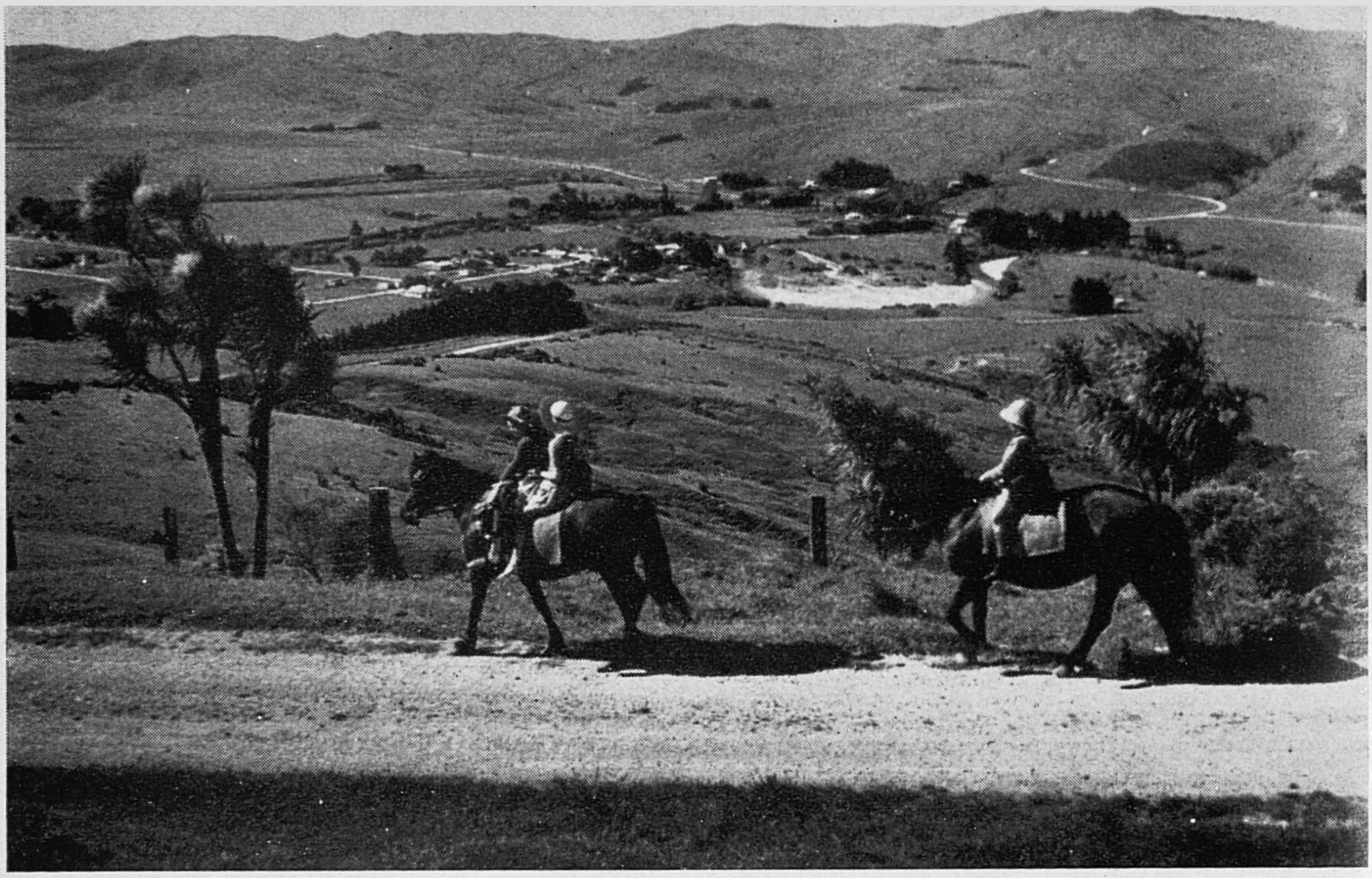
To overcome the disadvantages caused by the necessarily punctual arrival and departure of buses two courses appear to be open—either to extend the total school day by bringing the children earlier and sending them home later, or to make provision within the existing school day for more sports and physical activities. The first alternative would entail too many disadvantages to be seriously considered. The day is already long enough for most children who travel in buses, and it is too long for the young ones. And apart altogether from the tiring nature of the long school day for those who have to be up early, one should consider the effects of allowing the school day to encroach unduly upon the other activities of a child's life at home, the educative influence of which is invaluable and should not be lightly curtailed. The second alternative, has already been adopted in some schools.

THE OPEN COUNTRY—SOUTHLAND

THE OPEN-ROAD SCHOOL—CANTERBURY



[*Photographs by courtesy of the National Publicity Studios*]



APPROACHING THE SETTLEMENT—PORANGAHAU

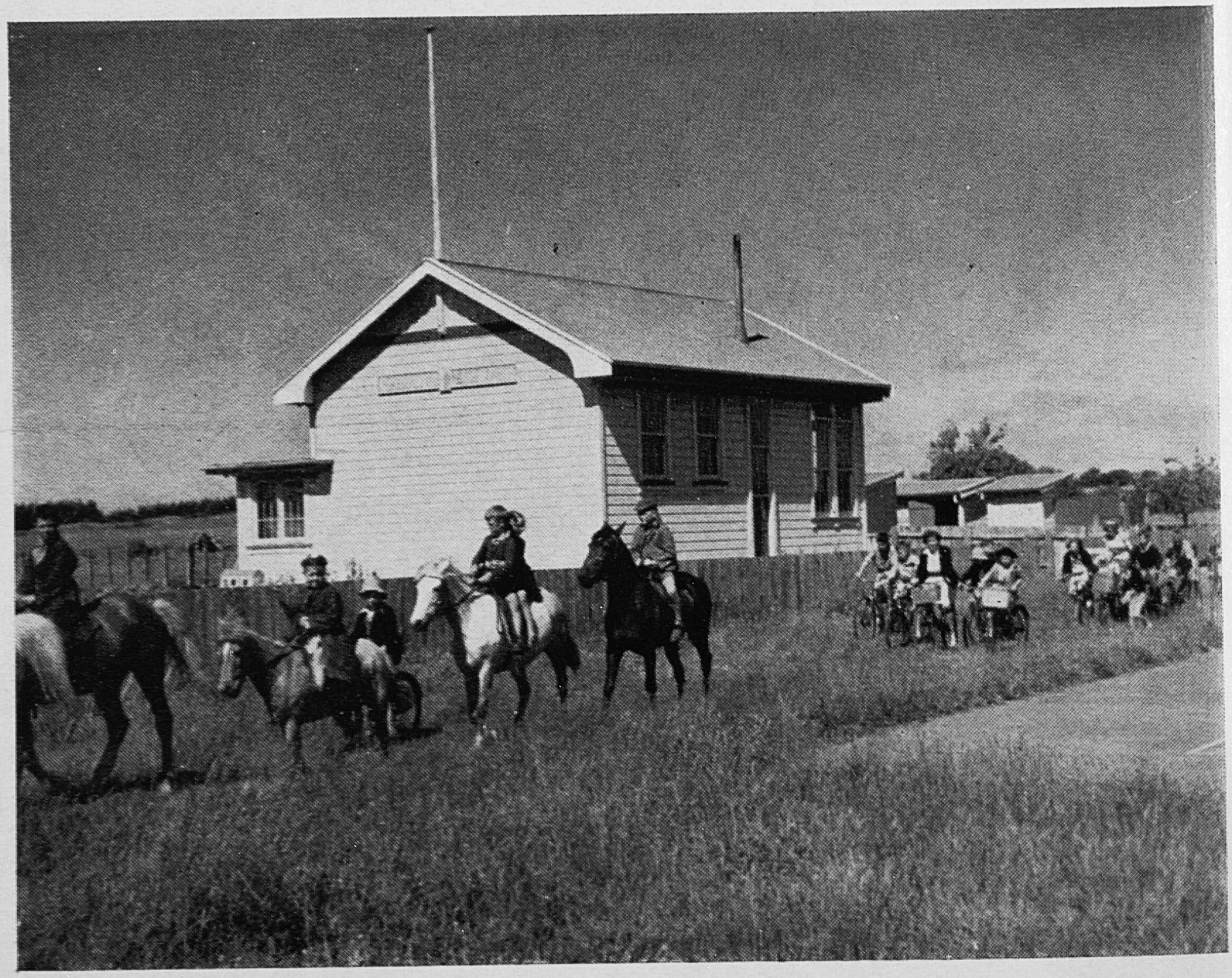
THE SETTLEMENT—RAI VALLEY

THE ONE-TEACHER SCHOOL—CLYDESDALE

MATHEMATICS FOR THE OLDER CHILDREN

CRAFTS FOR EVERYONE

GOING HOME



Many teachers, however, consider that there is little spare time that can be taken from the other school subjects without making it difficult to cover the work planned for their classes. There is no simple solution to this problem. When the school day is strictly limited, the time allotted to each activity must be carefully weighed. Some changes in the usual allocations may well be justified in consolidated schools in order that the children may get a reasonable opportunity for sports. The circumstances are different in each district, however, and this is a matter that may have to be decided by each school in its own way.

It has been suggested that instead of consolidating our schools, we might well extend the practice, not uncommon in parts of Australia[24] and not unknown here, of periodically bringing the children to a central meeting place for joint sports and other activities that need numbers. There is no doubt of the value of such meetings. Even one a year can bring a new spirit into an isolated country school; but to have an effect on the social life of children comparable with that of the consolidated school the meetings would need to take place very much more frequently than they usually do —once a fortnight would hardly be enough. There would, however, be many difficulties in the way of arranging regular meetings so frequently. Transport would not always be easy to find, and the uncertainties of the weather might well prove troublesome. Yet the enjoyment and the value of children's games would certainly be increased by even a few sports days a year, and the method might well be tried by more schools.

The journey to school. The chattering gregariousness of the school bus contrasts markedly with the quiet of the road leading home from the little country school; and those who love the occasions for silent reflection, quiet talk, and patient observation of slow changes in the natural scene

[24] See, for example, 'Gold in the Hills', *Educational Magazine* (Education Department of Victoria) June 1950, 198-207.

that arise during a walk on a country road often pass adverse judgments on the effects of motor transport upon the personality of children. 'Noisy insensitive little monkeys', 'superficial babblers', are some of the more stringent comments that I have heard made on the products of bus travel. It is often said that country life fosters stable development of temperament and character and gives people a feeling for the place of man in nature and his dependence on the rhythm of the seasons; and some would say that the daily walk to school is one of the occasions when the child comes under nature's influence. Country dwellers, however, are far from being dependent on this particular opportunity. As they go their morning and evening rounds, feeding the animals and doing the many odd jobs that have to be done, country children will place many impressionable hours and years at the disposal of nature. Social life with others of their own age and interests, however, may be almost entirely lacking, and the half-hour morning and afternoon in the school bus often gives them a chance to make valued friendships. Nothing is easier for an adult than to misinterpret the buzz of conversation in a school bus. It is not the chaos it may seem to be to the adult who is trying to converse with the driver. It is the same noise that is found wherever people are gathered together, and for the most part it is made up of the conversations, discussions, stamp swopping, homework sharing, and general social intercourse of small groups of friends, using fully the few free moments of the day that they spend together.

Now and then there are complaints of bad behaviour on the buses, and where the drivers have not been attentive to bus discipline some unfortunate situations have come about. These have been rare, however, and on the whole the children behave as well as any reasonable person could want them to, and incidentally they acquire useful habits of bus discipline and a knowledge of road-safety precautions. At the other extreme, we should note here that in the past there have occasionally been serious complaints about the dangers

of allowing children to walk down long and lonely country roads. Giving evidence before the Cohen Commission[25] several witnesses remarked that if children were conveyed to central schools they would be 'under supervision all the way to and from school', and to the Recess Education Committee R. S. Webster, headmaster of the Piopio consolidated school said, 'The roads in many cases were but rarely used. Needless to say, many a mother has had anxious thoughts of her child's moral welfare. To-day with consolidation, parents have assured me that that misgiving has vanished.'[26] In recent years at least, there have been only rare complaints about the moral hazards of country roads, and this particular argument in favour of consolidation as a general policy is not a strong one.

HEALTH

Objections have often been made to consolidation on the ground that the health of the children would suffer in consequence. The fatiguing nature of the bus journey, especially to the little children, the dangers of exposure to infection in crowded buses and classrooms, missing the midday hot meal, the difficulty of sending children home urgently in cases of sickness, and the lack of sickroom provision in the schools, are some of the points that have been raised from time to time.[27] On the other hand it has been said that the shelter provided by the buses in wet weather, school dental clinics, and other services provided by the consolidated school would in fact have beneficial effects upon the health of country children.[28] It is by no means easy to make a judgment on the issues, for in crucial instances the necessary medical data do not exist. As far as possible, however, I have made some attempt to grapple with the main problems raised.

[25] *A. to J.* E-12 1912, 65, 294, 473.
[26] *A. to J.* I-8A 1930, report of the Parliamentary Recess Education Committee, *Educational Reorganization in New Zealand*, 25.
[27] See, for example, the report of the Waipa Branch of the New Zealand Educational Institute, *National Education*, June 1946, 180.
[28] See, for example, *A. to J.* E-12 1912, 294, 423; E-1A 1916, 9.

Fatigue. It is recognized in almost every school I have visited that the children in the infant departments find the school day too long, and that even the older ones in the lower standards are tired in the afternoon. These smaller children have to stay at school for the full length of time that the older ones do, often, indeed, till the high school is dismissed. Instead of going home at two o'clock or two-thirty, as is the common practice in infant departments, they may have to wait at school till as late as half past three or a quarter to four to catch the bus, and perhaps have a long walk at the end of the bus trip. It is clear that many of the children have a long and tiring day but it is difficult to know whether, on the whole, they would be better off without consolidation. An analysis of the times of leaving home in the morning and arriving back at night may be of some value in deciding this point.

In a sampling of nearly a thousand pupils of consolidated schools and small schools I have found that about one-third of the bus pupils have to leave home more than one hour before school opens in the mornings, about one-third leave between forty-five minutes and an hour before, and the remaining third leave between thirty minutes and forty-five minutes before. In the afternoon, just over half the pupils arrive home within an hour from close of school, a third arrive between an hour and an hour and a half, and the remainder (perhaps a tenth) take more than an hour and a half to get home. Where the buses make round trips the children who leave home earliest in the mornings are first home in the afternoon, their total school day averaging about seven and a half hours. Children who live on straight bus runs are not so equitably treated, however, for the first on are the last off; and, while on the average the length of their school day is much the same as that of round-trip children, they are the ones who suffer from great extremes—some of them are on the bus only five to ten minutes morning and afternoon, but some are on it for over an hour each way. In extreme cases (comprising not more than one per cent of the pupils,

I think) children are away from home between nine and ten hours, for they have to walk or ride for as long as half an hour to get to or from the bus stop. Very few children, however, have to go more than a hundred yards or so from their door to the gate or to the corner where they are picked up. Most town children, or township children living within two miles of a consolidated school, walk further each day than most bus children, and they get wetter in wet weather. It is now the township children who go to school in raincoats and gumboots and the bus children who wear jerseys and sandals.

In the small country schools, on the other hand, fewer than twenty per cent of the pupils had to leave home earlier than forty-five minutes before school began, half left between thirty and forty-five minutes, and nearly a quarter between fifteen and thirty minutes. For most of the children, therefore, there is a considerable difference in favour of the local school; and the younger ones in particular are better off, for many of them can go straight home after being dismissed (as is usual) somewhat earlier than the older ones, while at the consolidated school they would have to wait till the buses leave. In the extreme cases, moreover, the bus pupils appear to be much worse off. It is now rare for children of the rural school to leave home more than an hour before school starts. Even those who live three or four miles from the school no longer walk, and seldom go on horseback, since roads are usually good enough for the speedier bicycle which takes less than half an hour, unless the journey is very rough and hilly.

Summing up, it may be said that for those bus pupils who leave home an hour before school starts (say ten minutes to the bus, forty-five minutes in it, and five minutes at school before the bell rings) the school day of at least eight hours is too long. There can hardly be any doubt about its undesirability for young children, and even for the older ones it greatly limits the time they have available for other important parts of their lives. That a large proportion (one-third) of the bus pupils have so long a school day is a serious disadvantage of consolidation, and for the young children even the average day is too long.

It would seem reasonable to suppose that in most country schools, where so often the infants and junior children have to wait at school till their older brothers and sisters get out or till the buses depart, there would be regular and long afternoon rest periods for the young ones. Unfortunately it must be reported that at the time of this survey most schools were making no provision for rest periods, and where they were the rest periods seldom lasted longer than a quarter hour or twenty minutes. Incredible as it may seem, I have been told by teachers in some infant departments that the children are too tired to do much work between one o'clock and two-thirty but that they do what they can and are then let out to play till the senior school closes and the buses leave. Why, in such circumstances, the teachers did not see that all the infants and even the children in the lower standards lay down for one hour's rest after lunch and then had an hour's school work and games till the end of the day, is hard to understand. It was not that equipment was lacking. During 1948 the Education Department made provision for the education boards to obtain canvas stretchers, and most consolidated schools have been equipped with them. In more than one infant department, however, I have seen the stretchers stacked away unused.

Illness. Many parents favour consolidation because their children do not get so wet when travelling by bus in bad weather as they otherwise would. This is undoubtedly true of the majority of children, though there are many who have to go some distance to the bus stop and are worse off on wet days than before, because they now have to sit wet and cold for half an hour or more in the bus. Some people have held that consolidation causes the spreading of illnesses. They say that when coughs and colds have broken out in one small locality and the children have travelled from there to the central school, the infection has quickly spread throughout the surrounding district, whereas formerly it would have been confined to the one place. How true such

contentions are is very difficult to discover. The daily attendance seems to be slightly more regular in the consolidated than in the small school,[29] no doubt because of the convenience of bus travel. Yet it is possible that bus children may be tempted to go to school when they are slightly unwell and would be better at home, in which case higher attendance figures would not be entirely a matter for congratulation.

I have not been able to find reports of medical examinations of comparable groups of districts and schools from which an accurate knowledge of the relative incidence of illness could be gained, but it is the view of medical authorities with whom I have discussed the matter that bus travel and crowded classrooms undoubtedly contribute to the spreading of illness. The present Director of Child Hygiene, Dr G. L. McLeod, has told me that he is strongly of the opinion that children under eight years of age should not travel long distances to school by bus. The combination of crowded conditions, tiredness, and lack of appetite for the evening meal too often has a bad effect upon the health of the younger children.

It has been suggested occasionally that the increased risk of infection through bus travel and centralization is not entirely disadvantageous. Rural children living in comparative isolation do not appear to develop the same immunity to certain illnesses as do city children, and when an epidemic sweeps the country it may take an exceptionally heavy toll in rural areas.[30] Might not consolidation, then, by constant spread of small doses of infection increase the immunity of rural children? It is possible that it would; but no medical authority would support consolidation on these grounds.

[29] e.g. the attendance figures for 1943 given by W. F. H. Sutton, op. cit., were: large consolidated schools (10) 91 per cent, sole-teacher schools in Canterbury (140) 86 per cent. The New Zealand average for that year was 89 per cent. However, it should be pointed out that the groups are not exactly comparable, for the consolidated-school figures may include the attendances of post-primary pupils.

[30] See the figures given by A. W. S. Thompson, 'Poliomyelitis in Auckland, 1947-49: An Epidemiological Study', *A. to J.* H-31 1949, 75-102. Not all districts showed the same trend, however. See F. S. Maclean, 'Poliomyelitis in New Zealand, 1947-49,' *A. to J.* H-31 1950, 90-112.

Such an uncontrolled, survival-of-the-fittest method of improving the public health has many defects. First, it is ineffective with illnesses like the common cold and influenza that do not develop a lasting immunity. Secondly, it does not graduate the virulence of its dosage to the strength of the children infected—some will be immunized, but others will be severely stricken. And thirdly, young children tired by travelling are less able than others to overcome infection. Health authorities, therefore, prefer the direct method of controlled, specific immunization where this is possible.

Children's meals. 'Consolidation means malnutrition', wrote a teacher some years ago. 'Children of tender years leaving home in some cases not later than eight o'clock often-time with a hurried breakfast. Lunch of sandwiches or biscuits, fish and chips, or stodgy meat pies—with no provision for seating accommodation. Back home again after four to a warmed up dinner or else wait till six o'clock or later, when the family dine. What class of feeding is this for growing children?'[31] The underlying assumption that children in the small school usually go home for a midday meal is certainly unsound: not only do large numbers not go home, but many who do go home have much the same sort of light lunch as they would have taken to school. Still it cannot be denied that children who spend an unusually long time away from home should be provided with a good midday meal at school.

Few schools have a place, other than the classroom, where children can eat their lunches in cold weather; few provide a hot drink for their pupils even in winter; and only two or three consolidated schools serve a hot meal or arrange that the children who have the longest day can get a hot meal in the township. Though the difference between the actual practice in the small schools and in the consolidated schools is not great enough for much significance to be attached to it in the matter of children's health, the difference between what is and what could be done is very great.

[31] *National Education*, September 1936, 267.

The results of such experiments as the one described by H. C. D. Somerset[32] leave no doubt that a great deal can be done to improve the nutrition of the children without necessarily providing school meals, and other experiments have shown that carefully planned cold lunches can be more nourishing than the usual kind of hot meal that the children have at home.[33] When, however, a hot meal service is carefully planned, as has since been done at the Oxford District High School,[34] there is good reason to believe that the bus children will reap a special benefit. It should be said here that there is hardly any point in going to the trouble of arranging for meals unless they ensure a better diet than the children would be likely to get otherwise. The provision of sandwiches, made in the local tearooms without dietetic supervision on the part of the school, is hardly a good enough service to justify the school time spent in administering it. The difficulty of providing adequately for meals is admittedly great, especially when school buildings have not been planned with such a service in mind. One would hope that in the future consolidated schools will be provided with rooms and equipment that will make it possible for a good midday meal to be prepared and eaten under reasonably comfortable conditions.

Dental and medical inspection. It is a convenience to teachers, parents, dental nurses, and school medical officers to have the children of a large district grouped together in one school. Medical inspection and dental care can be carried on with a minimum of administrative difficulties. But as far as the children themselves are concerned there is hardly enough to be gained in these days of efficient transport to warrant conveying them to the central school for two hundred days in the year for the sake of services that take

[32] H. C. D. Somerset, *Child Nutrition in a Rural Community*. Wellington 1941.
[33] See 'An Experiment with the Oslo Diet', *N.Z. Education Gazette*, 1 November 1945, 285.
[34] See 'Hot Dinners at School: the Oxford Scheme', *N.Z. Education Gazette*, 1 August, 1946, 211.

two days. Even in the most remote districts, parents do not find it very hard nowadays to arrange for their children to be taken in to the central dental clinic for treatment, and few schools present the same difficulties of access to inspectors and medical officers today as were common even thirty years ago.

Special facilities. One of the special problems of the consolidated school arises from the difficulty of taking care of a sick child. It is seldom easy to get someone to take the child home, and few schools have a spare room properly furnished and specially set aside as a sick-bay. Where these have been provided they have not infrequently had to be converted later into storerooms, staffrooms, film projection rooms, and general-purpose rooms as the number of children has increased. In a consolidated school, however, every effort should be made to keep a sick-bay properly appointed for its special purposes, especially where there are adolescent girls in the secondary department.

Here again it may be said that this can scarcely be made an issue in the general question of consolidation, for, with or without consolidation, our schools have seldom been well provided for in such matters, even in country districts where children have always had to travel some distance to school. We must remember, however, that the situation is greatly changed when the number of children in a school is increased. Up to a point the headmaster can and constantly does use his own house as a sick-bay, and his wife acts as nurse; when consolidation raises the school roll such a solution becomes impracticable. It must be emphasized that a consolidated school by its very nature needs facilities that even a much larger school whose pupils all live nearby may be able to dispense with.

Chapter 3

The School and Its Community

IN the early days of settlement when roads were merely wheel ruts worn through the river shingle, plains tussock, or hill clay, family homesteads scattered throughout the open country were knit together into a 'neighbourhood' by bonds of fellowship and mutual help. From time to time the settler went to the nearest township to the sales and markets, but unless his homestead was within a very few miles only on rare occasions did his family go with him. The little townships themselves, with only a score or so of families, might in their turn be isolated from each other, and like the neighbourhood they too were practically self-contained. The centres of community life were the school and the church. Not only was the school building used for meetings, church services, dances, social gatherings, and the lending library, but the teacher himself played a most important part in the serious affairs of his community. In some districts, indeed, especially where small farming, bush felling, or gold mining went on, he might have been the only person of any education. His value to the settlers was then very great. We hear of the teacher showing his neighbours how to build the corners of their cottages true, how to cure diseases of their cattle, we hear of him giving legal opinions, business advice, and all in all taking responsibility for a fearsome range of day-to-day decisions in the life of his fellows. In many parts of the country one could truly have said with J. W. Robertson Scott: 'In the three hamlets I know best of all, the standard-bearers of progress, civilization, evolution, the higher life, better living, true religion—call it what you like—are unquestionably

the head teachers at the schools.'[1] To have taken away the school would have been to take something out of the life of the early settlements which nothing else could have replaced.[2] Yet the typical form of early village life was not static. The position and the functions of a school and its teachers underwent many changes with the years, and in studying consolidation we must relate the educational changes to the actual state of the community in which they occur.

The changing status of the school. The improvement of roads and the building of railways brought closer settlement and larger townships. The school became less and less in any important sense a centre of the community's life. Among the legacies of the first World War are the little memorial halls in numberless settlements; and when halls were built schools lost an important function. In many districts the school buildings had been much used for social purposes—indeed people have been known to oppose the building of little schools on the ground that public money, set aside for educational purposes, should not be spent in erecting 'social halls' all over the country.[3] With the spread of literacy, the provision of frequent mail services, the coming of weekly newspapers and then the dailies, and the installation of telephones, the educational level of the whole country was raised. The number of men in the professions increased until many a township came to have its own lawyer, doctor, minister, bank manager, stock and station agent, postmaster and stationmaster to whom the ordinary mortal could turn for advice. The teacher, along with the others, became more and more specialized in his craft; he and his school both tended to play a narrower rôle in the general life of the community. This process of specialization did not take place evenly, nor did it go on in the same way and at the same pace everywhere. In those parts of the country where settle-

[1] J. W. Robertson Scott, *England's Green and Pleasant Land,* Chap. 12. London 1925.

[2] See *A. to J.* E-12 1912, 549, 644, 646.

[3] e.g. *A. to J.* E-12 1912, 422.

ment and schools came late, particularly in the North Island, the teachers seldom held a personal position comparable, say, with that of the dominie of early Otago; yet their schools may have played a very important part in the adult life of the newly founded communities. In some parts of the country, on the other hand, the changes have come but slowly and are still far from complete. Such places, however, are rare; by the beginning of the second quarter of this century there were few localities where the older pattern could still be found.

Social surveys carried out about that time by students in the university departments of education give a useful though somewhat depressing picture of the new isolation of the school.[4] The impossibility of persuading householders to attend meetings to elect school committees, the difficulties met with in getting school grounds kept in good order or in raising funds for a few extra books or other equipment for the classroom, the infrequency of parents' visits to the school, the rarity indeed of the occasions on which the school buildings or grounds were used by the adults of the district—all these testify to the changed place of the school in the community. The teacher still took part in the community's activities. He was a member of many committees and clubs, and his wife joined (or might help to found) the local Women's Institute. In the not very numerous cultural associations such as the W.E.A. study group or drama circle he and his wife would both be likely to play a vigorous part. It was the school as an institution and the teacher as teacher rather than the teacher as a person that were isolated by the increasing specialization of the larger-scale society. Yet a distinction such as that implied here between the official and the unofficial aspects of the teacher's life is rather artificial: there has always been a barrier, however slight, between the teacher and other members of the community, and the increasing specialization of his functions inevitably raised it

[4] Valuable material will be found in various M.A. theses listed in Mary Mules and A. G. Butchers, *A Bibliography of New Zealand Education*, revised edition 65-6, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Wellington 1947.

higher. There were other reasons for the barrier, too. Compulsory schooling was not always popular, and in many districts the teacher was felt to be, with the truant officer, a representative of interfering officialdom. In return, to achieve professional status, teachers asserted their own authority unambiguously inside the school gate and often shut it firmly in the face of the community. Parents were kept in their place. How many young teachers of those days remember being advised by their mentors never to hear a parent's complaint unless it was put down in black and white, and to be chary of allowing the school to be used for social activities because of the trouble they would have with unreplaced desks, disturbed wall-charts, and so on? In such an atmosphere the teacher often had a not altogether easy time if he tried to be fully accepted as a person and not merely as 'the teacher' Frequently, of course, he succeeded, but by the time that the consolidation of small schools came to be accepted as Departmental policy it was a rare district of which one could say that the school was in any real sense the centre of community life.

The increase in motor transport in the twenties revolutionized country life, and the school was only one of the institutions that were affected. Settlers now could get to the nearest township in less than an hour, where formerly the journey with a horse and trap (if the road were good enough for the trap) would have taken the best part of half a day. The farmer in the remote settlement now took his family to the township on Saturdays for shopping, to the pictures, to dances, and on Sundays to church. He himself went on sale-days as well. All over New Zealand the lives of country people came to be focused in the small township of three hundred to a thousand people, the commonest type of rural community, 'a form of life intermediate between the city on the one hand, and the open country on the other', as an American report puts it.[5] The open-country schools and even the

[5] *Schools in Small Communities*, 20. Seventeenth Yearbook of the American Association of School Administrators. Washington 1939.

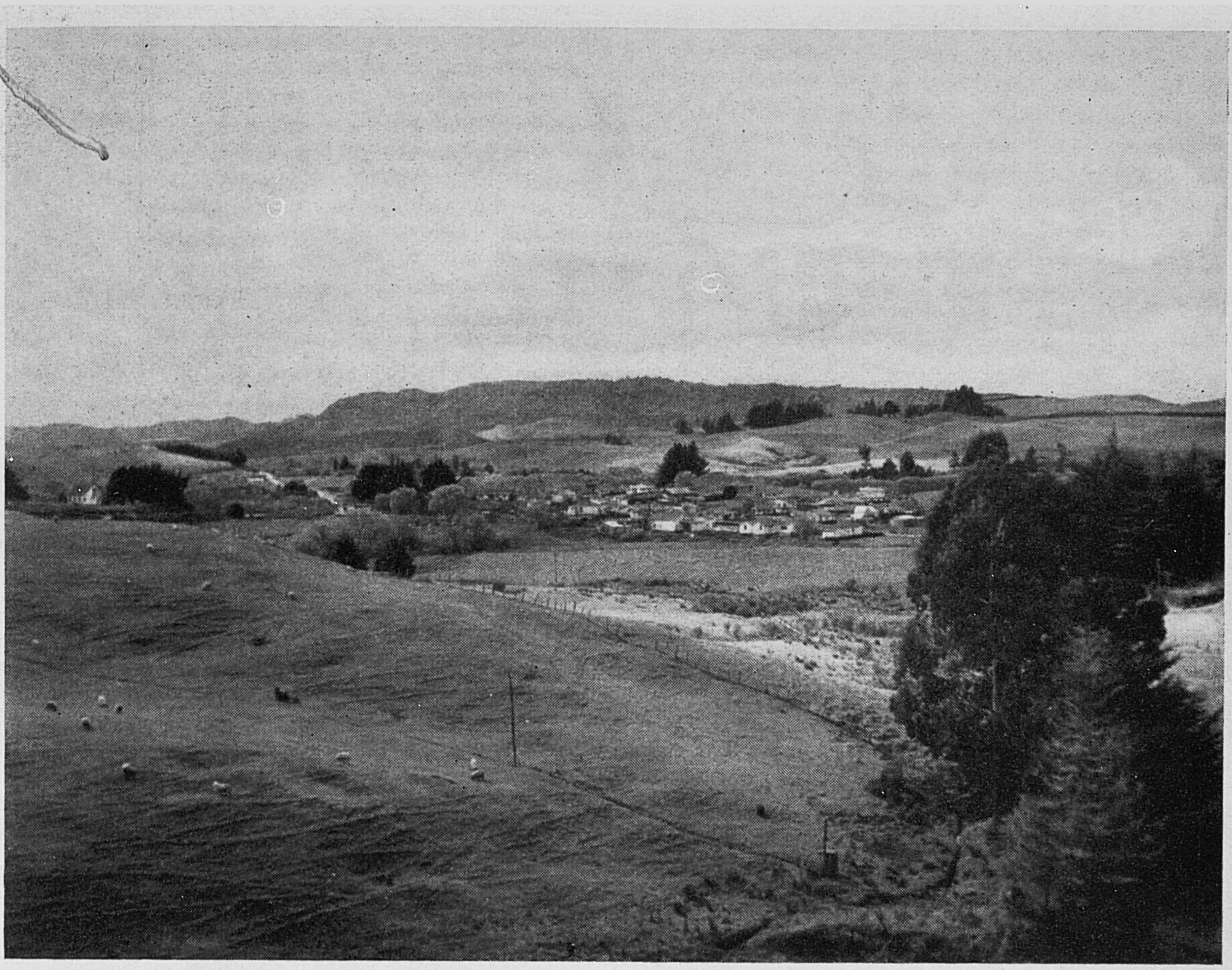
schools situated in small village settlements were left stranded in the backwaters as the tide of social life ebbed away from them. The movement to close the little schools and take their children in to central townships simply carried on in the educational field what had already taken place in the economic and social life of the country.

In addition, one must remember that between the wars there was a period of gradual decline in the rural population in most parts of New Zealand. Open-country and village schools that had flourished for decades began to die as the families of post-war settlers grew up and left the rural districts. When these schools had but a few children left they were closed, and the children were taken further down the road to the next school or to a nearby township.

The effect of closing a school. In those localities, unhappily not rare, where there has been little organized community life, where social contacts have been limited to the friendly visiting of neighbours and the daily chat over the party line, where teachers have tried for years without success to get together a drama group, a W.E.A. study circle, a branch of the Women's Institute, or a tennis club, the existence of the school has meant nothing to the associational life of the people: there was none. In some places such a life had never grown up; in others it had flourished earlier, when the community had been comparatively isolated, but had been stifled when easy transport allowed those who wished to join clubs and societies in a larger centre nearby. There are many examples of deserted villages of this kind in New Zealand, where the asphalt tennis court is overgrown with grass, the football field has been trodden into bog holes by the cows, and what once was a well-used common or domain is now overgrown with grass, thistles, and gorse. Teachers have struggled to revive community life in vain, or have known a transient success to flicker out when others, less enthusiastic than they, have taken over the school after them. In such places consolidation has had few obvious effects upon the social life of the community.

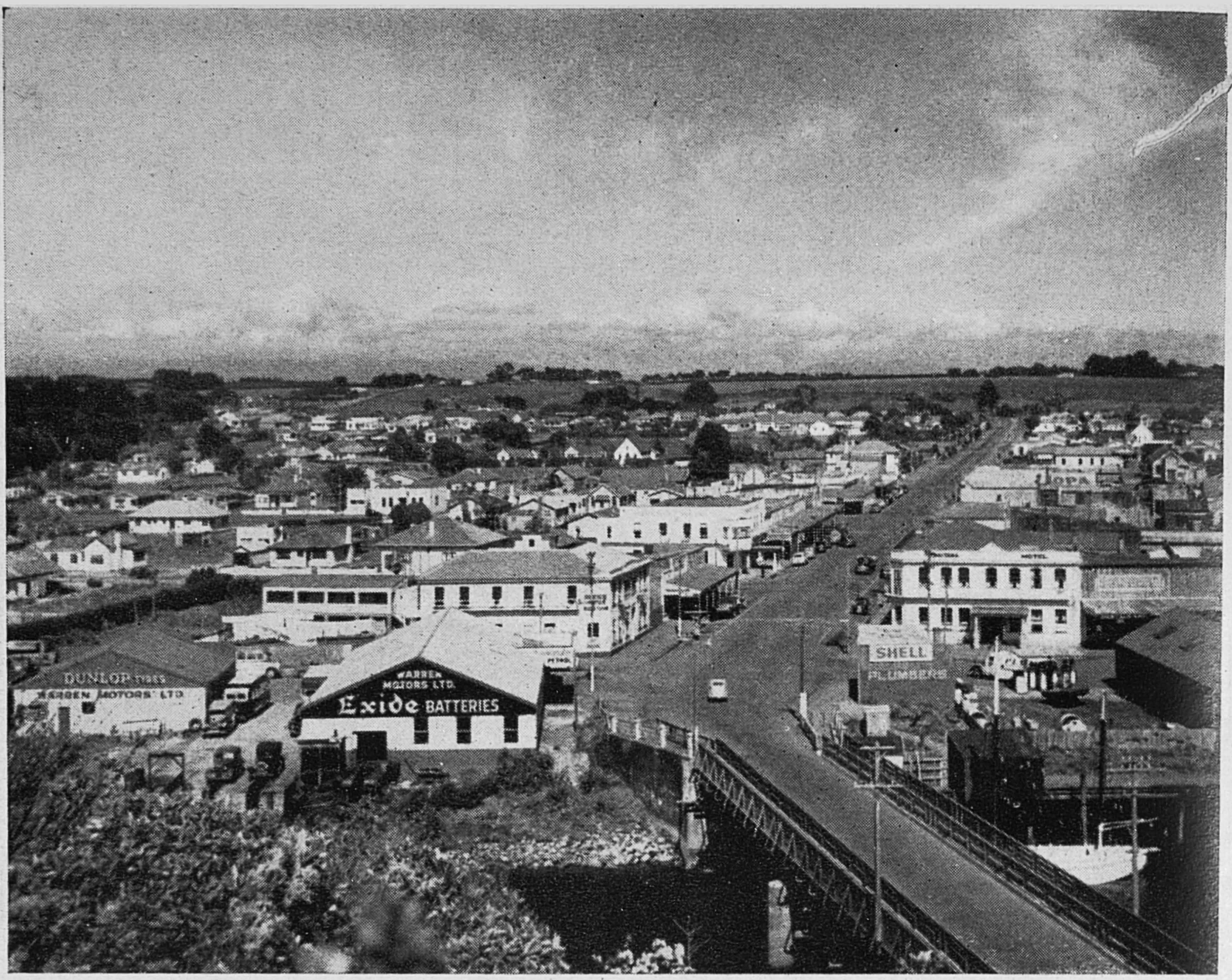
Many little settlements, however, have a comparatively rich social life. Sports are actively taken up, especially lawn tennis, table tennis, and badminton, which do not need many players; women's groups of many kinds meet regularly; so do young farmers' clubs; there may even be a musical society, a choral society, a play-reading circle which will produce a one-act play at the district drama festival, and an adult education extension class studying economics or child psychology or the modern novel. In by far the greater number of places that I have studied in the course of this investigation such activities have been carried out in the district hall or in private homes. The school buildings have been seldom used except for card evenings to raise funds for school purposes. In only a very few instances have I found clear evidence that without the school buildings and equipment the social activities of the district have been or would have been harmed. Some communities whose schools have been consolidated have retained the old school buildings and still use them as halls for social purposes. It is quite likely that those few communities that have been deprived of much-needed facilities by consolidation could have kept their school buildings had they been making good use of them.

The associational life of a community may suffer not only by losing useful facilities such as meeting rooms. There can be little doubt that when a teacher no longer lives in the district many of the clubs and groups lose an active member, often indeed the one person who almost traditionally has been given a good deal of the organizing and secretarial work to do. But perhaps this latter point should not be seen in quite the same light as residents of the district so often view it. It might be a healthier sign if the teacher were not so often expected to be the secretary of this and that, and if attempts were made, in the interests of the residents themselves, to spread such duties rather more evenly. However this may be, the fact is that the departure of one keen member may easily cripple a little group that is struggling along with only a few people in the district really interested in its work.



THE TOWNSHIP—PIOPIO

THE TOWNSHIP—ASHHURST



THE COUNTRY TOWN—WAITARA

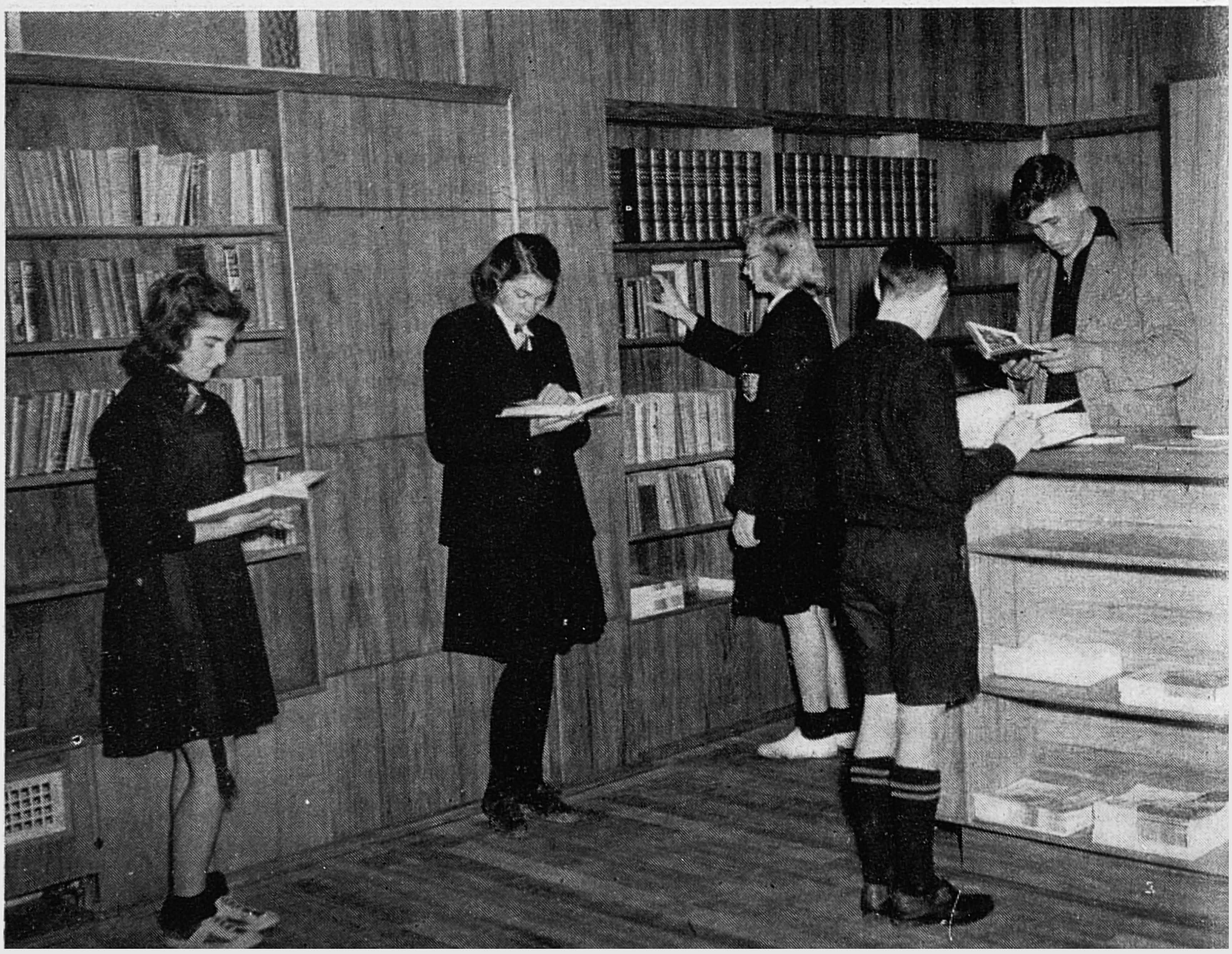
A CITY INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL—LOWER HUTT

OLIDATED SCHOOL—TAPAWERA

REST PERIOD FOR THE INFANTS

ASSROOM IN A LARGE SCHOOL

THE LIBRARY OF A DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL



When, as is often the case, this keen member is the teacher, consolidation may cause a serious loss, but so may the normal promotion of this teacher to some other school and the appointment of one who cares little for the community's activities. Here again, when associations hold together only because there is one enthusiast to do all the work the suspicion arises that the other members do not feel that the activities really hold much of value to them. Many teachers in such circumstances have felt that they needed to live in a larger community where they would be able to find more people with congenial interests.

There are other ways in which the absence of a local school may be a loss to the people of a district apart altogether from those which directly affect the associational life of the community. Seeing their children growing up is a thing that is dear to the hearts of most parents, especially when the children are small. To know that the children are there, not far away from the family farm where the mother and the father are working, to know that they are in the care of one who is in a real sense a neighbour, is to feel that the community has a point of focus in its children at least. For the mother and the father this can add greatly to that sense of belonging to the land which gives meaning to country living. When the children are older we expect them to go further afield, but when they are still in their infancy and early childhood the nearer their schooling comes to being just an extension of their home life and the more obviously it is seen to be so the more satisfaction and contentment it brings to the parents. Life on the land is a sweeter thing for young parents when they are within sound of the school bell.

However true it is that the teacher has too often been a person somewhat remote from the other members of his community it is still important for parents to know the one who is looking after their little children, to be able to talk over problems with him if that should be thought necessary, or at least to feel that the teacher is at hand if needed. Indeed, even when the children have grown up and are away at high

school, it is good for their parents to have someone with whom the inevitable problems of their children's educational needs and vocational interests can be discussed. Country teachers are constantly being called upon to discuss such problems about children of the district whom they may not themselves have taught, and knowing as they do at first hand something of the home background they are often able to be of no little service to the parents.

On the whole I am inclined to think that it is in these less obvious ways, in the teachers' personal relations with the parents and in the parents' feeling about the growing up of their children, that the deeper values of having a school in the community reside. While these are aspects of country living that are not often considered they are of great importance, particularly as they touch on the satisfaction that young men and women may hope to derive from founding families on the land.

The teacher, too, is more than merely an expert in the education of children: he is a citizen, and he may be a valued member of the community. No longer, it is true, is he expected to give professional advice on all the activities of daily life, but he still stands for a certain way of life and for the enrichment of human living. A settlement feels that its own stature is enlarged somewhat when a teacher lives in it. This may be an unjustified attitude if there is little intimacy between the teacher and his neighbours, but if genuine respect and friendship can develop it will be of profound value to the life of the settlement. For the more intelligent children and adults, moreover, to have a good teacher as a neighbour and friend may be the means of evoking and sustaining intellectual interests and standards that otherwise would perhaps have little encouragement. Most settlers in country districts will say that they feel the poorer when there is no longer a good teacher living in their midst, and for anyone who is sensitive to the value of social contacts and their influence on the quality of human life this is an important factor to bear in mind when rural education is being considered.

The consolidated school. When studying the consolidated school in relation to its community we must take into account the main differences between the several distinct types of community in which consolidated schools are found. The most common instance is that in which a one- or two-teacher school is closed and the children are taken to a nearby small school which is also in the open country or else in a very small settlement still far from reaching the status of a township. Here the relations between school and community are unlikely to differ in any important particular from those we have already discussed in the preceding section. At the other extreme we have small schools which have been consolidated on a large town or even on suburban schools on the outskirts of cities, as has happened at Palmerston North and Wanganui for example. In such cases it has almost always happened that the people of the country locality have already become assimilated to the suburbs for all purposes except residence and work, and if the children suffer any undesirable consequences through going to the suburban school these are partly due to the general defects of large schools and partly to those general social changes already discussed as resulting from consolidation; they are not specifically related to this particular type of consolidation, as is sometimes implied by those who deplore the urbanizing of the country child. Urbanization has already taken place in such instances before consolidation is brought about.

Much greater changes in the community occur when a consolidated school is created by centralizing four or more schools scattered over a wide area. These large-scale consolidated schools are most commonly found in townships of a few hundred people (as at Pleasant Point, Seddon, and Ruawai; or in boroughs of 1,000 to 3,000 people (like Matamata and Te Awamutu) that are the centres of economic life in an area of three or four hundred square miles. Since the coming of the motor-car and good roads the townships and small boroughs have held the promise of becoming centres of a rich social and cultural life for the people of

the surrounding countryside, though this promise has too seldom been fulfilled. It has always been hard to get any but the keenest people from outlying districts to take part in the many clubs and societies that can be found in a little town, a fact that is known only too well to people who have tried to organize such activities. The older folk, who have lived all their lives in the isolated locality, have become used to their solitude and have no wish to change their ways. The young people, on the other hand, would like to take a fuller part than they do, but too often their lack of friends in the township makes them feel out of place and they are reluctant to join the various societies that are open to them. In such a situation as this the centralization of schools can have an integrating effect.

The influence of a common schooling can be seen clearly only after consolidation has been in operation for some years. The friendships made by the children throughout a wide area bring to them a sense that the whole district is peopled by one community. If the friendships continue throughout the high school years they go very deep, and, at least for those people who do not leave the district, they tend to be lasting. When school-days are over it is natural and easy for the young people to keep on going to the central township for social life with their old friends, especially where the school itself does something to bring its ex-pupils together from time to time by arranging social gatherings and organizing cultural groups. The district high schools have always had some influence of this sort, but in the past it has been restricted for the most part to post-primary pupils who stayed some years at school, particularly those who did not leave the district to find work. Such, however, were a minority, and it is only in recent years, with the raising of the school leaving age, that large numbers of children have been affected. Where consolidation at the primary and intermediate level has occurred, however, a much broader and more general effect can be seen.

The number of associations to be found in quite small

towns is very large, as readers of *Littledene* will remember.[6] In several places studied in the course of this survey there were a great many sports clubs (bowls, athletics, cricket, football, tennis, hockey, basketball, miniature rifle shooting), several lodges, cultural associations (choral society, W.E.A. drama circle), young people's Bible classes and other church groups, various farmers' groups (the Farmers' Union, the Young Farmers' Clubs and the Women's Division), and there were Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Rovers, Rangers, and so on. What is relevant here is that, from analyses of membership that I have been able to make in appropriate cases, it appears that the number of people from the surrounding districts who play an active part in such associations is greater where there has been some centralizing of school life than where complete primary schools exist in the outlying villages and only a few high school children come in to the central school.

A less usual form of consolidation is that in which a completely new and large school is built in a central settlement which has not grown beyond the village stage itself and which has never been in any way a focus of community life in the district. In some cases of this kind the separate villages have had thriving associations and in some cases few or none, but for half a century or more, even after reasonably good roads have been made, there has been no centre of social life for the wider district and no pooling of resources on a larger scale. Even when the most central village has had the minimum of facilities—a hall and a sports ground—no wider association has taken place unless economic conditions have transformed it into a town much more populous than the outlying villages.

Where, as in such instances, the small original localities have previously had little or no organized social life the results of consolidation have been a clear gain. Where, however, groups and associations had some life in them the position is more complex. In some cases the smaller groups have merged into new and larger associations, with nothing

[6] H. C. D. Somerset, *Littledene*, Chs. 4 and 5. Wellington 1938.

but good results. The amalgamation of several small, ineffective, and often unco-operative local branches of the Farmers' Union into one large branch is a case in point. But in some places such a merger has meant a real loss to the small settlement. For example, the dying out of the homely dances held regularly in the school or hall of some of the settlements is hardly compensated for by the occasional provision of much larger dances and balls by the central organizations. In other cases again, the wider association has not killed off the small groups but has been complementary to them. There are village drama circles which continue to meet for play-reading while their members at the same time belong to the district club which produces full-dress plays. On the whole the gains more than counterbalance the losses, and in any case few of the losses are inevitable: local groups could in most instances keep going as well as before if the need for them were felt keenly enough.

A very unusual situation is found when the consolidated school is placed out in the open country (as at Clutha Valley and Tapawera[7]) rather than in any one of the villages. In such cases the transformation worked by a centrally placed school can be very great indeed. District-wide associations can more easily come into existence when people are able to use the large buildings and the equipment of a central school, and, more important than that, when they are bound together through the new spirit of community created first by the parents of the children who attend the new school, then by the other adults, and finally after a few years by the new friendships that will be built up among the children of the whole district while they are at school. When the range of community activities widens in this way the residents find that more of their interests can be satisfied.

In the Clutha Valley the consolidated school was placed in the 'geometrical centre' of the district, expressly for the purpose of overcoming local divisions which had prevented

[7] An account of the Tapawera consolidation will be found in *N.Z. Education Gazette*, 255. 1 October 1945.

any agreement being reached about siting the school in any one of the existing settlements. Little community spirit had been able to grow up among the settlements within the larger district, for in earlier times they had been the end points of roads leading out from four different towns—Lawrence, Balclutha, Milton, and Gore—and had developed in isolation, separated one from the other by hills and the river. When the consolidated school was founded, however, mutual interests began to be strengthened. Now the following groups meet in the school, and draw their membership from the whole of a district of some four hundred square miles: Federated Farmers, Women's Division, Young Farmers' Club, Greenfield Welfare Society, Film Society, Plunket Society, Amateur Athletic Association's Committee, Football Club, Drama Club, Country Library Service, Parent-teacher Association, Electric Power Committee, Pony Club, Ploughing Match Committee, and the W.E.A. A most significant detail is that the titles of many of these groups are now prefixed by the words 'Clutha Valley', the name of the new social entity that is coming into being. Another important point is that these bodies are on the whole strong and likely to endure, whereas the earlier small local associations led a precarious existence and had few dealings with one another.

The school that is placed in the open country rather than in one of the villages suffers from certain serious disadvantages, however. The teachers can rarely live near to it but have to board in the settlements or the outlying farms and must leave school with the buses each day. The headteacher and the senior secondary assistant will probably have houses built for them next to the school, and they will be isolated from the day-to-day social life of any of the village centres. When school is over for the day they are left alone with neither colleagues nor neighbours. For the pupils, too, there is a certain loss. When the villages are far away from the school the connection between school and society is not so obvious, and the workings of these simple forms of social organization cannot be easily observed at first hand as the basis of the

curriculum in social studies. It would be wrong to think that such a school was communityless; but when there is no visible organized community that is localized nearby and that the school clearly can be seen to fit into it is very easy to feel that the school is without roots in the general life of the district.

I think, therefore, that wherever possible the consolidated school should be placed in one of the more central village settlements rather than in the open country. If local jealousies seem to be too great to allow the choice to fall on one of the villages it would seem to be wiser to wait until agreement could be reached rather than adopt the 'geometrical centre' compromise with the disadvantages it entails. In point of fact, the sort of fears upon which these particular local jealousies are based are usually irrelevant. People fear that the presence of the school will give one village a prestige and facilities that the others will lack. There is truth in this; yet if pooling of their educational resources is seen to have advantages to all the villages there is little sense in refusing what is offered for fear that one partner will gain more than the others. There is even less sense in reducing the ultimate value of the new school for everyone concerned rather than allow it to be placed to the special advantage of one of the villages. The most convenient and centrally placed village should be chosen, if other things are equal—the other things here being the nature of the community life of the particular village and the economic, social, and topographical lines of communication between the settlements of the district.

Reversing the process. In some parts of rural New Zealand, notably in the northern half of the North Island and in the counties of the more northerly parts of the South Island, the rural population has been increasing steadily over the past twenty years. In some places the increases have been considerable—over thirty per cent. Even more recently the child population has grown greatly in rural as well as in urban areas. Young families are now growing up on the land in places

where for years there has been a predominantly adult population. This, as we have already noted, is one of the reasons for the decline in sole-teacher schools, for some of them have grown in size and increased in staffing. However, where consolidation of small schools took place in those years when the child population was lower a new problem has now arisen. Localities that have enough children to make a two- or even a three-teacher school may be sending them in to a central consolidated school which has become many times larger than it was at its founding and which is now overcrowded. In some cases the school may be so large that parents and teachers are dubious about its educational value.

The Otorohanga District High School may be cited as a case in point. When consolidation began there the primary school roll was about 350, after five small country schools had been closed. Today, the primary school has 900 children, of whom 500 are brought in by bus from the outlying districts. If there had been no consolidation the township (whose population, by the way, is smaller than that of the whole school) would have had a primary school of reasonable size, and in the surrounding countryside there would be three or four schools, each with two or three teachers if they were complete primary schools, or with one or two teachers if Forms I and II had been taken in to the centre.

But, one may ask, is there anything positively wrong with a consolidated primary school as large as Otorohanga? The question could be answered in a general way, but it will be better here, since one is considering a particular case, to give a specific answer. The primary and intermediate departments of the school are too big for members of the staff to be welded together as a team by mere informal and casual acquaintance with one another's work, and since many of the men are teacher-drivers it has been found impossible to hold regular policy-making staff meetings. Nor can the headmaster by his own efforts ensure consistent progression in the studies or see that the special abilities of his staff are used to the best advantage, for there has been the same

rapid turnover of staff in this school as has been common everywhere during the past few years, and where there are about 25 teachers such changes can be so constant as to impair seriously any attempts at continuity. The school is too large for the staff to know many children other than those who come directly into their ken in class or bus, and the teachers can meet no more than a handful of parents. In material facilities and equipment the school has been unable to keep up with the pressure of population. The playing fields of nine acres would be no more than adequate for the intermediate and secondary departments which together have nearly 400 pupils; prefabricated classrooms of all sorts and conditions have had to be put up; shelter sheds and lavatories are insufficient in number and inconveniently sited; there is no assembly hall, no room for a library; there is one radiogram and one motion-picture projector; there are two tennis courts, two basketball courts, and only a small swimming pool. All the facilities have to be shared by both the primary and the secondary departments of a school whose total roll is well over a thousand.

Difficult though it might be to reverse the process of consolidation it would seem that in districts like Otorohanga such a reversal would be fully justified. There are other places with similar difficulties, Te Awamutu for example, and though none has yet reached such dimensions we may find that with the increase of population in certain country areas this problem will often arise in the future.

The pupils and the community. We turn now to a different aspect of the relationship between a school and its community, one that more closely concerns its special educational functions. In the good school, it has been said, the larger community is never far away.[8] We have already seen that it is somewhat more difficult for pupils to study concretely the workings of a community and to appreciate the ties that

[8] H. C. D. Somerset, 'What makes a good school?' *Education*, 173, Vol. No. 4. August 1948.

bind it to wider communities when they are living in the open country and when their school is remote from even the nucleus of a village. This point now needs to be considered in its more general aspects, by comparing the small schools on the one hand with the consolidated schools on the other.

An American report[9] makes a threefold classification of the different ways in which schools and their pupils may take part in the life of their communities: observational, participatory, and contributory. This is a convenient distinction and I shall use it here. Not many schools visited in the course of this survey could be said to have made good use of the living communities around them as part of the material of their teaching. In the working out of their social studies schemes, for example, there was little to indicate to an observer that he was in any one particular part of New Zealand rather than another. Still, some schools have made notable attempts to develop a closer relationship with their communities, and it is necessary to consider consolidation from this point of view both because different types of school present different possibilities to their teachers, and because in the future it is likely that more schools will be aware of their opportunities.

On the purely observational level the small country town, as both J. E. Strachan and Alan H. Thom have pointed out,[10] is an exceptionally good place in which the teacher can 'base school learning upon the real life of a complete community' When the township has a population of a few hundred the pattern of community living is relatively simple, yet it is fairly complete and embraces most of the main aspects of human life. Some schools in such centres, including a few of the larger consolidated schools, have made efforts to let their pupils disentangle the web of social life through first-hand observation of the work of the farmers, the artisans,

[9] American Association of School Administrators, Seventeenth Yearbook, *Schools in Small Communities*, 128-9. Washington 1939.

[10] J. E. Strachan, *The School Looks at Life*, 33. Wellington 1938. Alan H. Thom, *The District High Schools of New Zealand*, 122. Wellington 1950.

the transport workers, the post office, the bank, the shops, and the stock and station agents. Social studies then have an admirable concreteness and directness. The teacher in a thinly settled district, however, finds it harder to infuse these qualities into his work. Second-hand materials such as pictures have to be used constantly and the imagination must be heavily drawn on, supplemented by occasional visits to a town.

In a loosely patterned culture such as ours, where there is an absence of traditional customs and ceremonies to bind together whole communities and where various little groups have their own habits, religious services, and forms of amusement, there is not much scope for the public schools, as such, to take part in the organized life of the adults. Private schools controlled by church authorities can and do participate in the whole year's pageant of religious observances, and by so doing they bring about a close relationship with one important aspect of adult life in a way that public schools cannot emulate. What participation is open to these latter schools is often sporadic and related to the satisfaction of *ad hoc* needs such as the collection of money for social services or the making of comforts for soldiers or orphaned children. Such activities have been vigorously carried on by most schools as far as their resources have allowed, but they have too often been felt, and rightly, to disturb the proper work of the school rather than to help it. This is mainly because the things which the schools have been expected to do have not been chosen for their educational value, but for some other extraneous purpose. An exception must be made here of the A. and P. shows and the traditional local flower-shows, which the school can help with value to its own work. More could be done, however. Even in the towns where the way of life is more complex there are generally activities that the school could well take part in with advantage to the lives of both the children and the adults. There are sports clubs which can have junior divisions, there are drama groups which could encourage the school to put on plays in a joint

programme, and in many similar activities the school as a corporate body could play a really valuable part in its community.

New Zealand schools contribute to the life of their communities to a greater extent than they participate in this life directly. Calf clubs have had a good effect upon the feeding and care of domestic cattle. An improvement in parents' attitudes towards nutrition has in many places been brought about by the school's attention to midday lunches, whether by providing school meals or simply by circulating useful information. Many teachers have deliberately set out to remedy through the children some of the cultural deficiencies of their communities, by encouraging reading and discussion, by introducing art and crafts into the home, by making an attempt to improve the manners and behaviour of the young people, by providing services such as a kindergarten or crèche at the school on market days so that young mothers could have more leisure, and by various activities of a similar nature.

The success of such efforts depends very much upon the qualities of the teachers themselves; and just as the small school is inclined to suffer from discontinuity and lack of variety in specialized interests and skills, so its contribution to the community tends to be haphazard. When there is a teacher with some well-developed interest, that interest brings about a decided change in the community—while the particular teacher remains. At the same time other needs of the community may be neglected. One teacher will improve the reading, one will encourage the study of local trees and birds, and another will set standards of personal appearance and taste in dress. Such contributions are important, yet they are likely to be transitory and they may be not closely related to what, in the long run, the community would seem to need most. A reasonably large school, however, can bring about the same sort of improvement in its contribution to the community as it can bring about in its own curriculum when good use is made of the special interests

and abilities of both staff and pupils. It is not hard to think of a few schools that, at certain periods of their history, have had a marked influence on their towns. Reflecting on these one realizes that in townships ranging in size from a few hundreds to a thousand or two thousand people the schools have a richer opportunity to build up a valuable relationship with their community than they have in small villages or in the open country, and they can contribute more fully to its life.

Parents and the school. The teacher in the small country school has unsurpassed opportunities for knowing thoroughly the background to his pupils' lives and for making use of such knowledge in his daily work. There is seldom a home in his district that he will not have visited nor a parent he has not chatted with on several occasions. He sees the children in the setting of their families. This is not to say that he always makes good use of his opportunities, or even realizes what they are, nor does it necessarily mean that the relations between teacher and parent are pleasant and good just because they are in some ways inevitably close. It does mean that the teacher can hardly fail to be aware of the parents and their attitudes, and that the parents for their part get to know the teacher as a person and have the opportunity of discussing their children's education with him at need. Even to know that the teacher is at hand gives a feeling of security to parents that helps to foster a co-operative spirit between the community and the school. In most districts the good teacher can count on being able to develop this spirit if he in turn shows himself willing to think of the whole development of the child rather than merely confine his attention to what happens between nine and three. A poor teacher is in a difficult position; so are the parents. Over the span of their children's school lives they have seen a succession of teachers, they have critically noted the differences between them, and when so much depends on the teacher they will do what they can to get a poor one to move on. So, for

good or ill, in a small district the teacher can hardly be isolated from the parents. There may be friendship and co-operative help; there may be hostility and constant interference; there can hardly be simple isolation and unawareness.

In the large school, on the other hand, isolation and even indifference are possible. I found that in consolidated schools with roll numbers exceeding 300 pupils it was unusual for a teacher to have met more than a handful of parents of the children he taught, and seldom had an assistant teacher visited any of their homes or indeed could say exactly where and how they lived. The headmasters were rather better placed, however. After they had been in a school for two or three years most of them had met a number of parents and could say that they were acquainted with the parents of the older pupils at least, and that they knew these children fairly well. They were not often able to say that they knew many of the younger children who had not been at school a year or so. Teacher-drivers were in a somewhat better position than other assistants, for they knew the children on their own particular bus routes and had at least a glancing acquaintance with those homes that were not far away from the road. On the whole, however, the large country school is as impersonal from the parents' point of view as is the usual city school. Once more the question of the size of a school must be considered, for the teachers of the smaller consolidated schools, in spite of the extensive districts they served, had built up a noticeably closer relationship with the parents.

From the point of view of parent-teacher relationships I would say that a school faces serious difficulties when its roll reaches the 300 mark. After that it would still be possible for close relations to be developed between the class teacher and the parents of his pupils, but no longer could the staff as a whole know and be known to all the parents.

The obvious difficulties that beset the teacher in a large consolidated school when he wants to get to know the parents are the size of the school district, the scattered homes,

and the consequent impossibility of his visiting them frequently or of the parents visiting the school. Casual meetings in the streets of the township are not enough, and even these do not happen when the consolidated school is not in a township at all or if the teacher-driver lives by himself at the end of a bus route. In most country districts nowadays there are few parents without motor-cars and few who do not go to the township or through it at least once a week, but they seldom visit the school to meet their children's teacher or to see how their children live in the classroom. It would take a good deal more positive encouragement than is commonly given by teachers before parents would pay frequent visits without feeling that they were in the way or were wasting the school's time. Parent-teacher associations have come into prominence in recent years, however, and the consolidated schools have not been slow in trying to overcome their isolation by interesting outlying parents in the work of such associations. The response has been very encouraging. At general social gatherings, held once a term in some places and more often in others, hundreds of parents will turn up from miles around. Indeed, the contrast between the number of parents who will attend the meetings of a parent-teacher association and the handful that will be found at the biennial meeting of householders to elect the school committee is itself an indication that parents are seeking to have closer relations with the school though they may have little interest in the kind of duties that school committees must undertake.

The enthusiasm of the parents has in some cases proved somewhat embarrassing to teachers who have started such associations. Not only has it sometimes been harder to get as full an attendance of teachers as of parents, but it has always been difficult to know how best to organize the meetings so that both teachers and parents can really meet and discuss common interests and problems. Too often the meetings have been of the kind in which items are given for two hours on end while everyone sits passive in the school

hall or in the double rooms of the infant department, and then, only for a few brief minutes at supper time, do the parents and teachers get a chance to chat. Under such conditions few parents will ever be able to meet the teachers. On the other hand, where different sections or classes in the school have their meetings separately, the infants on one night, the junior standards on another, and so on, there is much more opportunity. When, too, the meetings are not of the audience-performer type but allow all to take part, as in high school pupil-parent-teacher dances and socials or in parent-teacher discussion evenings, the occasions afforded for closer relationships are greatly increased. Only rarely, however, do we find regular meetings of the parents and teachers of small sections of the school. Mass meetings are the rule.

Parents' days are another means of encouraging a closer relationship, but these too are usually so formal, infrequent, and crowded that little real contact can be made. If a school is open only for two hours in the afternoon, once a year, for parents to see the children at work and some twenty or thirty parents are interested in each room, there is little time for a talk with the class teacher and less with the headmaster. It would hardly be a satisfactory solution, either, to increase greatly the number of such parents' days, for classrooms are overcrowded as it is, and a mass descent of visitors would upset normal working conditions without giving the teacher much time with each parent. The only real answer to this particular problem would seem to lie in fostering the attitude that every day is parents' day. In my opinion there should be a standing invitation to parents to come into the classroom any day to see what the children are doing and to have a talk with the teacher at a convenient time. Such friendly relations would be of particular value in the infant rooms and the junior standards where the children are just being introduced to school life. But I have never seen in a New Zealand school (what is common practice in some countries) a seat at the back of the classroom for the

use of the visiting parent, and few teachers take kindly to the suggestion; yet nowadays they need have no real fear that their work would suffer intolerable interruption. Most parents are sensible of the need to let the work of the school go on without hindrance, and they could nearly always be trusted to keep discreetly in the background. They would be able to have a few words with the teacher when he was free, and the very informality of such an approach would do much to build up happy relationships between them.

Establishing district high schools. The relationship between consolidation and the establishment of district high schools needs examination. No one would deny that some measure of centralization of secondary schooling in country districts is inevitable, but whether this must be dependent upon centralization at the primary stage is the real point at issue. It has often been stated as one of the advantages of primary-school consolidation that the provision of bus services would make it possible to carry secondary children too and would in some districts even permit the establishment of a district high school. Both these points deserve attention.

It is true that where primary bus services have operated and have carried secondary pupils the attendance at the secondary departments has steadily increased, and it is true that in a few striking instances (as at Tapawera and Clutha Valley) the new consolidated school has provided secondary facilities for the district for the first time. But there are districts, such as Matamata, Otorohanga, and Te Awamutu, where the number of secondary pupils alone justifies a transport service, and other places such as Lawrence, Owaka, and Pleasant Point may soon reach that stage. In such instances as these there would be no need to make the provision of transport for secondary pupils dependent upon consolidating the primary schools too—except that some economy would probably result from closing the small outlying schools. Whether the saving would be great enough to be worth while for its own sake is debatable. In those

borderline cases where perhaps only a dozen or so pupils might travel on a bus the total cost of keeping the small schools open and at the same time providing transport for secondary pupils would no doubt be high, but the position would be improved if consolidated intermediate departments were established together with the secondary departments. In those cases where the buses are already crammed and additional services have to be run through some of the localities, the extra cost of transport already incurred must go a long way towards offsetting any saving in teachers' salaries (which, in any case, is only great when the contributory localities are thinly populated).

A more pertinent case still is that of isolated country districts at some distance from a township with a high school. The young people here, in consequence, have little opportunity for secondary schooling unless they are sent away to boarding school. The Clutha Valley area was such a one. Only about a quarter of the children who passed the Form II leaving examination in the scattered small schools of Wharetoa, Puketi, Clydevale, Waitahuna West, Tuapeka Mouth, and so on, have in the past gone on to a secondary school. The distance to Balclutha was too great for daily travel, so they had to go to boarding schools. With the centralizing of primary education it was possible to institute a secondary department with about 25 children (primary roll 150). The region served is sparsely settled; the school district is some four hundred square miles in area. Here, if anywhere, it might be said that transport of these two dozen children would not be justified in itself. Yet even this is not incontrovertible. If transport had been arranged for the secondary pupils only, small cars could have been used instead of buses, as is often done to bring primary pupils to school in thinly settled districts; and if one of the villages had been chosen as the point of consolidation there could have been a one- or two-teacher primary school and a two-teacher secondary department. The cost of this would be greater than the cost of a complete consolidation, as will

be seen in the next section, but if there were solid educational reasons for retaining the local primary schools while establishing a central secondary department (or intermediate and secondary departments) it might be said that very sparsely populated areas have a fair claim to be served well even at a cost that is above the average.

Costs. The main purpose of this study is to assess the value of consolidation on educational grounds, yet the account would be incomplete without some consideration of the cost to the community. When scarce means have to be divided among many different projects we must always consider whether what is spent in one direction might not be better spent in another.

Fifty years ago whenever centralization was advocated the argument of economy was put forward. Replacing a number of small schools by a large central school would result, it was said, in a considerable saving. Maintenance, cleaning, and building costs for the single large school would be lower than those of the many scattered small schools, the amount of salary paid to the teachers would be greatly reduced as fewer would be needed to teach the same number of children; and there would be a saving in the cost of equipment, for no longer would each little school have to have its own blackboards, maps, charts, and models. In all, the saving was expected easily to offset the cost of conveyance.[11]

To make any estimate of the real comparative costs is, however, extremely difficult. It is quite invalid to compare the cost of consolidation in one district with the cost of small schools somewhere else, for conditions differ greatly from district to district. Nor can we make any accurate comparison between the present cost of keeping open a group of schools and the estimated cost of a consolidated school (or vice versa) for, while such a comparison may be fair enough at the time it is made, there are many constantly varying factors that may completely change the situation

[11] As examples of this line of argument see: *A. to J.* E-2B 1901, 15; E-1B 1904, 14; and E-12 1912, 558-60. There were sceptics, too: E-12 1912, 566-7.

after a year or two and upset the best estimates. In neither case, then, is it possible to make an estimate of the cost of a consolidated area that could be properly compared with the cost of the small schools. Nor, indeed, can the individual items always be accurately known. Conveyance, for example, is the main item in the running costs of consolidated schools; but it is an item which cannot be analysed with enough accuracy for the purpose of comparison. School conveyance services in most districts provide not only for primary school children who would otherwise have attended the outlying schools (and who alone should be included in a study of comparative costs) but also for a number of secondary pupils, children attending private schools, and children who would in any case have been going to the central school though living at some distance from it. It would not be possible to apportion the total cost among these different categories with any accuracy.

Official reports indicate that the gross cost of consolidation is thought to be somewhat higher than the cost of retaining the small schools. The Minister of Education in 1938, a year notable for the rapid expansion of consolidation all over New Zealand, reported that the new consolidations would affect some 7,500 children, including those already in the central schools, and that while the cost of additional conveyance was estimated at £20,000, that sum would probably be offset by a saving in salaries and allowances amounting to £18,600. The net additional cost was therefore estimated at only £1,400. His report pointed out that 'owing to fluctuations in school population and to consequent differences in the grading of schools from year to year, as well as to various other factors, it is not possible to state costs with positive accuracy, but the estimated net position indicates the cost to the Government of the increased educational facilities made possible by consolidation for the 7,500 pupils concerned. These increased facilities include more specialized and efficient staffing, better classification of pupils, in many cases manual-training facilities, and in

some cases secondary-education facilities.'[12] If that estimate were reasonably reliable, it would seem that in spite of the increase in gross cost there had been an appreciable economy in the new arrangements, for to have provided the extra facilities by themselves would have involved an expenditure of many more thousands of pounds. An analysis of the budgets of the larger consolidated schools appears to confirm this. In most cases transport costs slightly exceed the estimated saving in primary teachers' salaries, but make possible an economical secondary school service for the district.

In trying to form some idea of the additional advantages that may be said to be paid for by the extra cost, one could well consider a concrete case. For this purpose I have intentionally chosen an extreme example where a large and sparsely populated district makes both salary costs and transport costs higher per child than is usual. The accompanying table shows the actual cost of running the Clutha Valley District High School in 1949-50 compared with an estimate of what it would have cost to keep open the schools replaced. As we have seen, this consolidated school is a small one, with 150 pupils and four teachers in the primary department and 28 pupils and two teachers in the secondary department. It replaced nine schools, which had ten teachers in all. It is a good example to take here, as it shows clearly how costly it would be to establish only a consolidated secondary department in a thinly populated district.

	Consolidated school actual costs	*Small schools estimated costs*
Salaries—primary	£2,065	£5,305
—secondary	1,500	—
Cleaning	375	292
Incidentals	75	126
Maintenance	373	379
Conveyance	4,445	89
	£8,833	£6,191

12 *A. to J.* E-1 1938, 8.

It will be seen that in salaries paid to the primary school teachers consolidation has more than halved the cost, and has made it possible to pay two secondary teachers and still save £1,800. The differences in maintenance, cleaning, and the grant for incidental expenses are negligible. Conveyance by means of six buses, on the other hand, is responsible for an expenditure greater than the cost of salaries in the consolidated school and almost as great as the salaries that would have been paid to the sole teachers. If only primary and intermediate children are considered, the cost would appear to have increased by about £1,100. For the total additional sum of £2,642 moreover, secondary schooling is provided for the children of a district of some four hundred square miles, and a convenient centre has been established for dental service and for the itinerant instructors in domestic science, woodwork, and agriculture. The salaries of part-time instructors in domestic science and woodwork would have come to about £200, and this should also be considered part of the cost of the consolidated school. On the other hand, if no district high school had been established and the 28 secondary pupils had gone to boarding schools they would have been eligible for boarding allowances totalling £560; or they might have enrolled with the Education Department's Correspondence School and increased its costs.

In interpreting these figures, it should be remembered that this is an extreme instance, chosen for a particular purpose. It is not a typical example of the cost of consolidation. The six buses carry very light loads (averaging 27 children) over fairly long distances (averaging 50 miles per bus per day). It is certain, therefore, that bus transport costs will be heavier than in most other cases one could quote: they worked out at £25 per child conveyed, while the average for the whole of New Zealand was probably not more than £15 per child per annum. Most examples of consolidation would show a lighter expenditure on transport.

While the total expenditure by the State appears to be somewhat greater as a result of consolidation, an exact

figure cannot in fact be obtained. In the annual reports of the Minister of Education the statements of accounts give the amount spent on conveyance, but there is no way in which this total can be subjected to a close analysis. We see that in 1939 the amount spent was £252,487 and that by 1950 the figure of £814,201 had been reached, but it is impossible to tell how much of this could validly be regarded as the cost of consolidating primary schools. A considerable portion of the sum is spent on transport in circumstances where there could be no question of providing a school. The cost of conveying children to secondary schools comes under this heading, and since secondary pupils usually travel in the same buses as primary children one cannot separate the two items. The total figure includes, too, the cost of carrying country children in thinly populated districts where it would be quite impossible to provide each locality with a school. In an increasing number of cases, too, State school conveyance services are taking children to private schools. Finally, the total cost includes money refunded to parents who have made their own arrangements for the transport of their children.

State expenditure, moreover, is not the same thing as the total cost of a service to the community. By and large the position would seem to be that though consolidation costs the State somewhat more, it enables the country parent to be relieved of the burden of paying privately and directly for expensive additional services such as secondary education. Consolidation may be said, therefore, to have done much to spread over the whole community the cost of educating children in the remoter country districts; and some of the most valuable services could not have been provided by themselves without costing very much more than when they formed part of a wider reorganization.

Chapter 4

The School and Its Teachers

THE worth of any social institution, it has been said, is to be measured by its effect in enlarging and improving the experience of those who take part in its activities.[1] Even if such human values are not the things primarily intended when a particular institution is brought into being, they must be taken into account in any attempt to pass judgment upon the results of our actions. Consolidation of schools is a case in point. The main reasons why it has been advocated and adopted as an educational policy directly concern the education of our children. Yet many other people are affected by the change, teachers more than most; and what any particular type of educational administration does to its teachers has also a profound though indirect influence upon the schools. Looked at in this way the question becomes one of assessing the value of the small schools and the large ones as a means of training teachers in service. From the discussion that follows it will be seen that each kind has its own characteristic advantages and disadvantages, which must be weighed up carefully.

Professional skills. In the sole-charge school the teacher bears the final responsibility for almost everything that is done. In consequence he must learn a great many skills, he must know when and how to use them, and he must understand their relevance to the process of education. He must draw up a scheme of work covering the development of children at all stages of primary education, so that he has before him

[1] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*. 7. New York 1916.

at once a conspectus of the scholastic levels reached by all the children in the school as well as a panorama of knowledge by means of which he can guide the growth of each child from year to year. To construct such a scheme, even when the Education Department issues syllabuses and prescriptions in the various subjects, is a professional exercise very exacting in its demands upon any teacher. A young teacher must give up a great deal of his time for several years to thinking about it. Not only must the general outlines of the different subjects be sketched out and a gradual development ensured from year to year, but all the disparate elements must be woven into a continuing and intelligible pattern suited to the needs of growing children. The outlines then have to be filled in from day to day with fresh and living detail to avoid deadening the whole through too hasty, dry, and abstract treatment—and all this without spoiling the design through any over-elaboration of the parts. A young teacher's knowledge is seldom if ever precise enough for this daily enlightenment, so he has to read deeply and at the same time try to keep a balance among the whole range of subjects of his school. The stimulating effect of such a discipline upon the mental growth of an intelligent teacher who can respond to the challenge is marked. The challenge in some degree faces teachers in other kinds of school, too, but only when he is in a sole-charge school does the teacher have to weigh up and organize his knowledge from the point of view of the whole range of child growth from infancy to the beginning of adolescence. Not only knowledge itself, but the growth of knowledge is his study. The genetic and developmental aspects of knowledge must be understood by the sole teacher in a practical manner or his work will be gravely handicapped. Indeed, the conditions of his work hardly allow him to ignore individual differences in the way that is not uncommon when a teacher has charge of just one standard or a group of children belonging to a very narrow age range. Every teacher learns that he must build upon what foundations of knowledge the child already has; but how to lay such foundations that

each succeeding year's work will rest firmly on them is something that many are able to neglect—not the sole-charge teacher, however, except at his own peril.

So it is, then, that the sole teacher is forced to relate his knowledge and all the subjects of his curriculum to the differing abilities of children from five years of age to thirteen or fourteen, and so it is that he has an unequalled opportunity for seeing the relationships between methods of teaching, levels of child development, and the content of the school's scheme of work. Placed as he is, he can hardly fail to see that the curriculum must be thought out in terms of the individual children who are growing up in his school. He has no classes of any great size to teach, so he cannot fall into the snare of thinking about abstractions such as the average child. He must always consider each individual child in front of him. In many cases there will be only one or two children in a class: hence average standards will mean less to him than the concrete individual achievement that he sees and must take account of. It would be difficult to find a better means of making a teacher grapple with the central problems of curriculum building and teaching method than giving him sole charge of a group of children of all ages.

It must be admitted, of course, that this is an ideal picture, approximating to the progress of a good teacher. It indicates the best effects of work in a small school upon an intelligent, sensitive, and conscientious young person. Many teachers, however, cannot or do not face up to the challenge, and find quick, superficial ways of curriculum building by leaning too heavily upon such ready-made outlines as those offered by the ubiquitous *Teachers Monthly Guide*. For a young teacher who is finding it hard to cope with the difficulties involved in any serious attempt to work out an appropriate curriculum for a small school the help of an 'organizing teacher' would be invaluable.

One should not forget the very large number of matters of organization which fall to the lot of a headmaster, and which have to be dealt with by a sole teacher as part and parcel

of his school life in addition to the daily teaching. Registers and returns, requisitions and inventories, reports and accounts, and numberless other things are his responsibility, whether they concern the pupils or the equipment, the buildings, or the grounds. The whole school is in his care, and everything he does must be considered from the point of view of its effect on one or other of the host of different facets of school life. It would be hard to find a better means of preparing a person, in these particular respects, for the task of guiding and co-ordinating the work of a team of assistants in a larger school than giving him sole charge of a small school at a fairly early stage in his career.

The position of an assistant teacher in a consolidated school is very different. Usually he will be responsible for only one or perhaps two standards, and while he will have to prepare work for these children in many different subjects he will usually be concerned with a one-year segment of their school lives. It is difficult for him to see the whole procession of the years as it is reflected in the scheme of work of the school, for the master scheme can hardly be more than a brief outline, it will have been compiled by someone else, and its formulas will mean much less to him than if he had thought them out for himself. He will have a large number of children of about the same level in his class and will be tempted to think far more about the average standard of his work and the most suitable methods of presenting his materials to the average child than about the individual differences among his children and the need for considering both materials and methods in the light of these.

On the other hand, if he is a young teacher, he will have many advantages that the teacher in a small school has to forgo. He will be working under the guidance of an experienced headmaster who should be able to help him at need with suggestions concerning content and method, and there will be other assistants who share his problems and with whom he can discuss his difficulties. In this way he will often be helped to understand and cope with problems of

his work which, alone, he might have taken a long time to solve. Such help is at hand in many other things, too, in maintaining order and discipline, in organizing sports, in preparing time-tables, and in obtaining materials and making apparatus. Not having to worry about everything, the teacher in a large school is free to devote himself whole-heartedly to the main work of elaborating his curriculum and teaching his class. For the inexperienced young teacher there are distinct advantages in this freedom.

Yet since much of what he will do as an assistant in a large school issues from the thinking and planning of other people he will have little occasion to mature in the way that is possible when he alone is responsible for his children, responsible both to the education board and the inspectors as well as to the school committee and the parents. In an increasing number of large schools, it is true, much is now being done to develop creative team work by the staff in the co-operative planning of the curriculum. When a number of the headteacher's powers are delegated, too, the assistants have a good deal of responsibility beyond the walls of their own classrooms. But even in the best circumstances few assistants can gain in this way more than a partial and limited experience of school management. It would seem desirable, therefore, that as many young teachers as possible should have the opportunity of working in a sole-charge school or a two-teacher school after they have had two or three years in a large school. This would appear to be a very sound reason for retaining a considerable proportion of small schools in the education system.

Knowledge of children. The situation in which the teacher in a small school finds himself is, as we have seen, one which gives him an exceptionally good chance to know the pupils intimately. He gets to know the personal history and background of the children, he learns about their hobbies, interests, out-of-school skills, and he is able to see them in the setting of their own families, their occupations, and their

vocational prospects and ambitions. For this reason the relationship between schooling in the narrower sense and the social environment and tradition within which each child lives can be more clearly perceived. Most young teachers are intent on building up a personal philosophy of education, whether they couch it in philosophic language or not, and the breadth of outlook and comprehensiveness of experience given to a sole teacher are useful correctives against limited and partial statements of educational theory.

Coming closer to the practice of teaching we find, too, that the sole teacher is well placed to apply in his daily work whatever he has learned about the personal characteristics, needs, abilities, interests, handicaps, and assets of his pupils and this in turn intensifies the family atmosphere of the school. Each child can be given the treatment that is felt to be right for him and there is less pressure to treat all alike as average children. Commonly, therefore, there is a personal quality in the relationship between children and their teacher, and the normal problems of emotional adjustment are likely to meet with more sympathetic understanding and to receive more appropriate treatment than in the crowded, impersonal classrooms of a large school. Discipline presents fewer problems, and such as there are can be treated the more wisely when school, child, and home are closer to one another.

The teacher, as is well known, stands *in loco parentis* to the child, and his responsibility goes far beyond merely instructing the children in the customary school subjects. The breadth of such responsibilities and their seriousness is seldom fully realized by an assistant in a large school, but they are constantly brought home to the sole teacher and to the assistants in a two- or three-teacher country school. Care and supervision extend from the obvious things, such as looking after children who come long distances to school wet and cold and paying some attention to the out-of-school behaviour of the children in the settlement, to those long-term and less immediate things such as getting to understand

the nature of a child's ambitions and abilities over a period of years so that sound advice can be given about his further education and vocational prospects. Once the sole teacher begins to be aware of the extent of his responsibilities his attitude towards his children will already be very different from what it was when he was an assistant in a large school. Having a more mature perception of his duties he draws closer to his children, understands them better, and makes schooling less of an impersonal process for them.

The value of having teachers whose approach to children is informed by a sympathetic understanding of their nature and background can hardly be overestimated. Especially in the early years of school life it can have a lasting influence upon the child's feelings towards school and learning and upon his general attitude towards his fellows. The abruptness of the transition from home to school which, even in the best of circumstances, is hard to avoid in the large infant department of a city school is softened in the small country school, where the children make a family group and where the teacher knows them all very well and will have known the newcomers even before their enrolment takes place.

The foregoing generalizations arise from a knowledge of the experiences of teachers in many kinds of school. Their truth can readily be checked by anyone who has the opportunity of talking to teachers about particular children in their charge. The wealth of detail and of interpretative statement that most sole teachers (and their wives) bring to the discussion can seldom be even distantly approached by assistants in large schools—though headmasters, it is true, often gather a great deal of information about some of their pupils, especially the troublesome ones and the seniors who have been at school several years.

The headmaster and his staff. In the large school there is division of labour, a sharing of many of the details of teaching and administration which the sole teacher must himself attend to. Indeed wherever there are two or more teachers

team work is found, and team work involves a great deal of consultation and discussion. Where the teachers are few this can be carried on informally and continuously in the intervals for play and lunch, and after school. In such a way as this the teachers can plan their syllabuses jointly, and share their ideas about teaching methods, the keeping of records, framing school rules, planning excursions, and countless other things. They can discuss the troubles and needs of their difficult children. They can think of things they require the school committee to do. In brief, they can be a non-adjourning administrative body.

Except in rare instances the relations between a headmaster and his assistants are those that should be expected of colleagues in any profession. Authoritarian methods of making assistants carry out the headmaster's own ideas without joint planning and discussion are not often found in the smaller schools. The close personal relationships and easy contacts fostered by the limited size of the team not only render such methods unnecessary but go a long way towards making them inconceivable. A dictatorial headteacher, of course, or a difficult assistant can make the small staff a very unhappy one. There is no escape. Members of a large staff, however, can support one another under such conditions.

In the large school, on the other hand, it is not easy to arrange for joint planning of the curriculum, teaching methods and general administration of the school unless there can be frequent and reasonably long staff meetings. Yet it is rare to find schools that regularly have meetings of this kind. The usual practice still is to have short meetings at which the headteacher gives instructions to his staff, allowing just time enough for questions designed to elucidate his wishes. Day-to-day team work is secured by the headmaster as he visits the classrooms, discussing the problems with his staff one by one. In this way he can keep his school running smoothly and can bring about a close articulation between the work of all the classes without his assistants seeing the complete picture; but the professional experience

of the assistant teachers working in schools that are run on such lines leaves a great deal to be desired. It is almost impossible for them to understand the whole process of education when they are brought face to face with only a narrow segment of it. So many things happen unknown to the assistant teacher. Even the roomful of children who have come to him at the beginning of the year will pass on at the end, rather like the sparrow in the Northumbrian earl's famous simile, fluttering into the firelight for a brief moment and then flying out again into the dark unknown. The teacher may not even know where the children come from in the morning and go to in the afternoon. So much of his daily work tends to limit his field of vision to a year's span of teaching within the four walls of one particular classroom. When young children are concerned, such a limitation on the teacher's part is especially serious.

Conditions such as these are to be found in large schools whether or not they are consolidated. In increasing numbers, however, the ordinary town schools are making serious efforts to introduce co-operative educational planning by their staffs, through more frequent staff meetings on all sorts of matters of school policy, administration, and instruction; and it is likely that in a few years staff consultation will have been raised to as high a level in the large schools as it reaches informally in the small ones. Few of the larger consolidated schools find it possible to make suitable provision for staff meetings. The main reason, it is said, is that meetings of sufficient length cannot be arranged either before school or after school because a large number of teachers are on duty driving school buses. Teacher-driving will be considered in a separate section, but it must be noted here that one of the great disadvantages of the teacher-driver system is that it interferes with the normal preparation of lessons and with the holding of staff meetings. There are usually so many teacher-drivers in a consolidated school of any size that it would be undesirable to hold staff meetings in their absence, and there is no doubt that this has caused many headmasters,

rightly or wrongly, to give up all idea of having anything more than brief meetings of ten minutes or a quarter hour during an extended playtime or during the lunch hour.

To overcome such difficulties some headteachers have tried to work out a roster system for their teacher-drivers. More teachers than are needed are approved as drivers, and the usual drivers are relieved from time to time. If these relieving drivers are chosen from the various sections of the school—primary division, intermediate department, and secondary department—sectional staff meetings can be held without any of the teachers concerned being absent. Though such a method does not enable the whole staff to come together, it ensures that valuable meetings of the different divisions of the school can take place regularly.

In a few schools the last hour of the afternoon is set aside fortnightly or monthly for a full staff meeting, the children being left to work under their own supervision. They become very responsible and trustworthy when it has been explained to them exactly what is taking place. Not all teachers feel confidence in such a plan, however, and many have told me that they are unable to give their full attention to the business of the staff meeting when at the back of their minds is the thought of the hundreds of unsupervised children. There is certainly no easy or entirely satisfactory solution to be found where teacher-drivers are involved; yet, without much better means of staff co-operation than the larger consolidated schools can generally show at present, they are far from being suitable for the in-service training of the young teacher, less suitable indeed from this point of view than the ordinary large town school.

Living conditions. For a married man one of the attractions of the country school has always been the house that often goes with it. After fifty or more years of service some school residences leave much to be desired, but in recent years great improvements have been made and the post-war housing shortage has added to the value of a dwelling even if its

appointments are not modern. For the young married man the sole-charge school with house attached solves many problems. It is worth noting here the opinion of the sub-committee on rural education set up by the 1944 Education Conference, 'that the inducements to make teachers stay long enough in a community to have a real influence are (i) adequate housing, (ii) a grading and salary scale that makes for stability of staffing, and (iii) provision for refresher courses.'[2] The closing of numbers of small schools that would be acceptable to young married teachers may therefore cause a distinct loss of posts that from the point of view of living conditions are most desirable, and this in turn may add to the difficulty of staffing country schools. In most cases it is hard for such teachers to find houses in the townships where the larger consolidated schools are usually situated.

On the other hand the position is frequently difficult for the young woman sole teacher or assistant in a two-teacher school.[3] It has never been easy to find board when the school lies in the open country, but the small settlements usually have a home where it is customary for the teacher to be 'put up'. Although the crudities that the young woman teacher so often suffered in earlier days are seldom found today, really congenial places to board are not plentiful, and, unless she can live in a settlement of some size or near to a township where there is opportunity for the kind of social life young people want, the young unmarried assistant teacher finds little to attract her to country living. She will tend towards the town schools, where she will find it somewhat easier to get board and will have more chance of striking up friendships. Great difficulty has been experienced by most education boards in recent years in filling assistantships in the small country schools. In the main this is due to the general shortage of teachers, which at present makes it so easy for women assistants to get positions in the city schools,

[2] *N.Z. Education Gazette,* 1 December 1944, 303.

[3] See the report on accommodation prepared by a sub-committee of the North Canterbury Branch of the Women Teachers' Association, *National Education,* March 1946, 76-7.

but there has always been a certain difficulty in filling country posts, except in times of economic depression when many young women teachers have been forced to live in districts where conditions were undesirable.

While increasing the problems of the young married teacher, therefore, consolidation may nevertheless be expected to make it somewhat easier to find women assistants for country districts, provided that the consolidated school is in a township of some size where board is likely to be more readily obtainable. The large consolidated school in the open country or in a very small settlement is placed in a particularly difficult position. If board can be got it may be miles from the school, and may not even be on a bus route. Some teachers have a long distance to travel to get to their schools, often making two or more changes of transport in the one trip. Some teachers bach in the residences of the closed contributing schools. Indeed, some married teachers live in these and drive a bus in and out to the consolidated school. It makes a long and lonely day for their wives.

In many places more children come to the school from the outlying districts than from the immediate vicinity, and on occasion the population of a school will be found to exceed that of its township. The teachers may then form the largest single occupational group in a village that has little social life and can offer few amenities to homeless strangers. Even to house them may overtax the resources of the settlement. In one township six or seven teachers have been permanent residents of the sole hotel, and they have been isolated from the normal home life of the district. Before consolidated schools are established great care should be taken to give such sociological factors as these due weight, so that there will be some assurance of suitable accommodation for the assistant teachers. If living conditions are bad the school will have continual difficulty in keeping its staff up to full strength, and constant changes will hinder the growth of that unity and team work which are in any case seldom easy to achieve in a consolidated school.

It has occasionally been suggested that a block of flats might well be built for housing the assistant teachers of a consolidated school. The value of such provision is obvious, especially in townships, but there is a danger of segregation; in the open country this danger would be all the greater. As we have seen already there are grounds for considering the open-country consolidated schools undesirable in any case, and I do not think that the offer of a hostel for the teachers should be put forward as a means of gaining acceptance for proposals to establish further schools of this type.

Promotion. Some consideration should be given to the possible effect of closing a number of small schools upon the normal channels of promotion in the teaching profession. One of the difficulties in any profession that, like school teaching, involves organizing teams of workers and setting up a hierarchy of duties is to provide enough positions of higher grade so that the better people will have a reasonable chance of eventually obtaining the more responsible posts.

The absolute decline in the number of public primary and intermediate schools since the peak figure of 2,601 in the year 1927 to 1,908 in 1950 was caused mainly by the closing of one-teacher schools. The base of the pyramid of headteacherships—the sole-charge schools—has therefore been narrowed, and the peak has broadened somewhat in the same period through the opening of new large schools. While, therefore, fewer teachers can now have the experience of responsibility that headteachership gives (even when the school has but one teacher) a slightly greater number than previously may expect to reach the highest positions. But not a greater proportion. The number of primary teachers has increased in the period from 6,320 to 7,860, but whereas the proportion of assistants to sole and headteachers is now nearly 6 to 2, in 1927 it was only 3 to 2. To some extent this is due to the more generous staffing ratios of recent years, and to some extent it is due to a progressive change in the relative numbers of larger and smaller schools. Taking

into account all these circumstances, however, one can see that serious disadvantages attend the relative increase of schools of Grade VI and over, that is, schools with more than 350 pupils. Earlier I indicated certain educational reasons for holding the view that a primary school should not exceed 300 pupils. From the point of view of promotion within the service it would be better to have more schools up to the size of the present Grade V (191-350 pupils), including more sole- and two-teacher units, than to go on increasing the proportion of assistants to headteachers.

Especially since a basic personal salary scale was instituted the smaller schools have become very attractive professionally; and they offer many advantages other than the purely monetary. With the opening up of the country districts, the gradually rising population of certain rural areas, the increasing number of district high schools, the extension of cultural amenities such as the Country Library Service and the Community Arts Service and the growth of the adult education movement generally, it is likely that in the future there will be less incentive for the teacher to turn citywards than there was in earlier times.

Teacher-drivers. Of all the problems that have arisen through having teachers drive school buses I shall touch only on those that have a direct bearing upon the educational value of the consolidated school. One was mentioned when staff meetings were discussed, as a particular example of the difficulties such teachers face through not being able to be at school in the hour immediately before lessons begin in the morning and after they end in the afternoon.

Those teachers who live at the outer ends of the bus routes are worst off. They never have time for adequate blackboard preparation or for doing any work in the classroom in readiness for their day's teaching. They have little time to discuss their work with other members of the staff except at playtime and in the lunch hour, and they have very few opportunities for using the library and other

amenities that the township may offer and that might be of use to them in their work. Those who live near the school and not far from where the buses are garaged are in a better position, but still not a satisfactory one. They will usually have to take their buses out before eight o'clock in the morning and garage them again after four-thirty or five o'clock in the afternoon. In a great number of cases these teachers come back to school in the evening after dinner and put in an hour or so preparing the next day's work. This interferes seriously with their leisure and is felt to be a constant tie. Teachers who live some distance from the school are even worse off. Their only means of doing the necessary preparation is to stay at school after garaging the bus, and they are not really in a fit condition to do such work then, having already carried out a full day's teaching and on top of that having just driven the bus perhaps thirty miles over country roads. A cold schoolroom on a winter evening is not the best place to prepare for the next day's work.

The effect of bus driving upon the driver's health should also be considered. The length of each of the twice-daily trips is usually between twenty and thirty miles, but mileage in itself is seldom relevant to the question here: it is rather the conditions of travel that have to be weighed up. In some districts roads are flat and tar-sealed, and a relatively long trip brings little physical hardship; in other cases the roads are rough, narrow, winding, and precipitous, and a twenty-mile drive may take a long time and will require concentrated attention for every second of the way. Buses vary too. There are few buses now, it is true, that can compare with some of the crates that pioneered the consolidation movement at Piopio and Oxford, but there are still unsuitable vehicles which add unnecessary strain to the driver's day. As more and more new vehicles come into service, however, continual improvement is taking place, and the Education Department's newer buses appear to be satisfactory.

The strain of driving, therefore, varies greatly from run to run, and it is hard to generalize. On the whole I think

that the worst effects suffered by the teacher-driver result from the feeling of constant rush that he experiences. He arrives at school in the morning at the last minute without having been able to walk quietly along thinking over the work that he will be starting when his class assembles. He rushes off at the end of the day without ever having had the time to tie up the loose ends that are inevitable in the work of a teacher. On both trips he is torn between the need to devote his full attention to the driving and the perseverating thoughts about his school work. The case is somewhat different when a sole teacher is going the rounds, as sometimes happens, collecting a half-dozen or so of his own pupils in a motor-car. There is nothing like the strain and fatigue commonly found among the drivers of the large buses. It is only fair to the education authorities to point out here that the overcrowding which anyone can see while watching a school bus load up is nearly always of short duration: within five minutes the first bunch of passengers is dropped, and then there are seats for all for the rest of the journey.

The disadvantages of having teachers drive large buses on long and difficult trips are easy to appreciate, but there are advantages, too. It is often said by headteachers, even by those who recognize the disadvantages already mentioned, that the conduct and manners of the children on the buses are better when teachers are driving. There is some truth in this. While bus behaviour is on the whole satisfactory with the private-contract drivers, there have been occasions when unsuitable men have been chosen, discipline has vanished, and serious lapses of behaviour have taken place. Most non-teacher drivers have proved themselves to be very good at managing buses full of children, so from a few unfortunate instances one can hardly make out a case for using teachers alone. The answer lies in more careful selection of the drivers in the first place, and in making greater efforts to ensure that the normal behaviour of the children at school carries over to the bus trip. Bus monitors and prefects can help; though in cases of serious unruliness teachers need to

take care not to load the burden of a too difficult task upon a child's shoulders.

Suggestions have been made sometimes that if teachers alone drove the buses a greater flexibility of service would be possible. The buses could be used at any hour of the day when a social-studies excursion or a nature study trip was planned or when there was a distant sports meeting to attend. Where the education authorities own their own buses, however, this argument appears to have little to it, for teachers could still be permitted to make use of the buses for such occasional purposes as these even if private drivers were employed for the regular daily trips to and from school.

It remains to be said that the extra remuneration earned by the teachers for driving is the main inducement they have for taking on such work. In general the allowance is worth a good deal to a teacher—more, certainly, than any single promotion he is likely to get—and in many cases it effectively keeps him in his position longer than he would normally remain, for almost any early change he might make will be likely to decrease rather than increase his total salary.

When the relevant educational facts are taken into account it would seem that there is a clear balance in favour of having the regular daily driving of large buses for long distances done by special drivers and not by the teachers. So far as the usual consolidated-school services are concerned I would agree with the conclusion reached by the Waipa Branch of the New Zealand Educational Institute that teacher-driving is not in the best interests of teacher and child.[4] Wherever suitable private drivers can be found it is desirable that they should be used; it may be a long time, however, before teachers can be freed from this work. It is difficult to get private drivers for the few hours daily that a school bus is in use, and at present there is no sign that the general shortage of labour is easing. Very often the teachers are the only people who can be guaranteed a full day's employment

[4] Recommendations of the Waipa Branch on 'School Conveyance Services', *National Education,* 1 April 1946, 107.

between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. and at the same time can be available for driving the buses before and after these hours.

The efficiency of teachers. One of the arguments commonly put forward to show the superiority of large schools was that there the best teachers would be found. Positions in large schools were 'the prizes of the profession', said one witness to the Cohen Commission, and in a way this was undoubtedly true. The implication for country folk was that, by centralization, they should take care to have such prizes in their own districts and not allow the urban areas a monopoly of them. The argument has its peculiar features, however. Among these prizes are the headmasterships, but these often withdraw good teachers from the actual work of teaching. To point this out is not to deny that the headmaster has an important, indeed critical, influence upon his school; yet in the last analysis it is the classroom teacher whose daily influence upon the children has the greatest educational effect, and the lot of forty city children placed under a poor teacher cannot be greatly improved by the best headmaster. A fairer comparison, therefore, would be, not to compare the inexperienced sole teachers with the city headteachers but with the urban assistants, and when making this comparison we should remember what would happen to the inefficient rural teacher when consolidation closes his school. Presumably he would still teach, as an assistant under a prize-holder somewhere, perhaps even in the country.

Let us now examine the matter a little more carefully. In earlier years, when rural teachers were poorly paid and a very large number of them were untrained and uncertificated, one could find unbelievably low standards of teaching in their schools. A continual shortage of teachers made it difficult to do without untrained people, and consolidation may then have been a partial solution, in so far as it reduced the total number of teachers required and put unqualified ones under the supervision of headmasters. If there had been no absolute shortage the position of small schools could have been eased

by the simple expedient of making country teachers' salaries more attractive than those of assistants in the city.

This indeed was one of the effects of the revised salary scale of 1938. The older scales had made the teacher's salary depend almost entirely upon the position he held. Up till 1938, therefore, the young man teacher usually began his career in a small sole-charge school, moved on to larger sole-charge schools, then to the headmastership of a two-teacher school, and only later did he go to a town as an assistant if unable to get a larger headteachership. The young woman teacher often began as a sole teacher or as an assistant in a country school, and only later became an assistant in the city. The 1938 salary scale changed the situation greatly. It inaugurated the basic personal salary, which ensured a certain number of annual increments to the teacher's salary even if he remained in one position and did not seek promotion; and it weighted the country positions favourably. After the new scale came into operation it became more common to start as a junior assistant in a town school and only later on to become sole teacher in a country school. Indeed, for assistants even of some years' standing in city schools, to go to the country as the head of a two-teacher school was promotion. The housing shortage of the post-war period placed a further premium upon the small school with a residence, and made such schools even more desirable from the point of view of the married teacher. This further accentuated the tendency for the sole-charge school to be sought after by teachers who were much more experienced than those who would have staffed them a generation earlier, and it has ensured a supply of well-qualified teachers in these positions in recent years. One may note in passing that the 1946 salary scale appears to have decreased somewhat the weighting of the small headteacherships in favour of the first-assistantships in the city schools, though the results of this are not yet clear. The housing shortage in the towns, however, continues to make country schools with residences attractive to young men teachers, and no doubt will do so for some years to come.

In experience and efficiency then, it would seem improbable that the balance is at present tipped markedly in favour of the city teachers; but concrete evidence is hard to get, and it is not easy to make any accurate comparison between sole-charge teachers and those in the consolidated schools. People have sometimes taken simple, objective, yet indirect measures, such as years of experience and number of grading marks, in preference to the direct yet more elusive assessments that might be made by observation. The indirect measures are, however singularly ambiguous: the most highly graded teachers are not necessarily the best, since the effluxion of time irresistibly sweeps even mediocre ones on towards the bar, if not over it. Sheer age and length of experience themselves may often, indeed, have a rather negative implication—so old yet still in a small school! In point of fact the average number of years of experience of assistant teachers in a sample of consolidated schools was found to be somewhat less than that of a large sample of sole-charge teachers—4½ years as against 6½ years. The distributions were dissimilar in shape, moreover, the consolidated school teachers being scattered rather more evenly along the upper reaches of the scale than were the sole teachers. Only a quarter of the sole teachers had more than ten years of service, compared with over a third of the consolidated school teachers. There was no appreciable difference in the length of time spent by these teachers in their present positions, in each case the average being just over two years.

As an indication of the relative efficiency of teachers, distinct from their length of service and accumulated grading marks, it would seem at first sight possible to consider the biennial marks allotted by the grading officers. In the 1951 grading list the average of the biennial increase in marks among sole teachers was 13 points, while for teachers in a sample of large consolidated schools the mean was 12 (the same as the mean for all teachers). The distribution curve in each case was similar, being somewhat curtailed at the

upper end. The sole teachers, then, would appear to be slightly superior. But one could use these biennial increments with confidence as an index of teaching quality, isolated from the effects of length of service on a teacher's grading mark, only if two assumptions about the grading system were true: firstly, that the biennial increments followed the same curve of distribution at each level on the grading scale, and secondly, that all teachers, whether male or female, sole teacher or assistant, were treated as one group for purposes of comparison. Unfortunately it is not likely that the distribution curves do remain stable in this way. For one thing the more experienced teachers, as a group, appear to have been given higher marks. There is some doubt, too, whether all teachers have in fact formed one pool. If we compare only the men in the different types of school we reach a different result. Male assistants in consolidated schools obtained on the average the same marks as sole-school men. The grading marks obtained by women, in the 1951 grading, however, were lower than those of the men; and as only a fifth of sole teachers are women (as against twice as many women assistants as men in the consolidated schools) this is the reason for the apparent superiority of the sole-school teachers. A correct interpretation therefore depends on whether the women's lower grading marks really reflect a slightly lower level of teaching efficiency or not. It is not unlikely that they do. A large number of women teachers have no intention of making teaching their life work and are in fact only temporarily in the service. They do not have the same incentive to increase their efficiency as do the men. On the other hand, the possibility that some irrelevant statistical influences may also have played a part in the grading process cannot be ruled out. The difference between men's marks and women's marks may not be quite what it appears. Taking everything into account, however, I think it probable that there is a slight difference in general efficiency, as measured by grading marks, in favour of the sole teacher. On the other hand there is no significant difference in the teachers'

certificates held, and just a slight balance in favour of the primary teachers in consolidated schools in respect of university degrees and diplomas gained.

It should not be forgotten in interpreting these findings that, with the decline in the number of small schools, those that had been worst served by their teachers have been on the whole the earliest to go. Districts have clung to their schools when the teacher has been particularly good. Selection has taken place and has undoubtedly weighted the scales in favour of all but the most remotely situated of the remaining sole-charge schools.

Though the median differences between the groups may be only slight and the range of efficiency of the teachers much the same in each type of school there is one extremely important difference that must not be lost sight of. Every large school has a wide variety of teachers on its staff, from the probationary assistants who have just left the training colleges to the infant mistress and the seasoned first assistant. The sole-charge school, on the other hand, has just one, and, a point sometimes forgotten, that one may be found almost anywhere in the whole range of ability and experience. The risk that children in small schools run is therefore great: if they happen to have a poor teacher they may suffer under him for several years without mitigation. But if the children in a large school have the same bad luck they will normally have a change of teachers at the end of the year, and in any case there are other teachers at hand (including the headmaster) whose influence may do something to help.

To insure the small school against the risk of having an unsuitable teacher several things might be done. Salary scales could be so weighted that the 'marginal' positions are not those in the small rural schools but are the junior assistantships in large schools, special care might be taken in making appointments to the small schools, and the use of 'organizing teachers' to help the sole teachers in country districts might well be resumed. The first, as already noted, did in fact occur when the 1938 salary scale was introduced;

and present conditions have tended to increase the attractiveness of country positions for head and sole teachers. The second presents certain difficulties. Under existing methods of appointment, those applicants are usually chosen who are most highly graded on the Teachers' Register, irrespective of their particular experience, abilities, interests, and personality. Only occasionally is any special care given to the selection of teachers for sole-charge schools—or, for that matter, for any of the 'general' positions in the teaching service. If, however, it were possible to extend the provisions of the 'special position' regulations to cover sole-charge schools the chance of unsuitable appointments could be greatly reduced. Appointments would then go to the most highly graded applicants among those who had the special qualifications and qualities required in the position advertised. The third approach should present few difficulties. The system of having itinerant 'organizing teachers' to help sole teachers, particularly those just taking up their appointments has been used in the past, and it did much to ensure continuity of work and to fit inexperienced teachers for their new and unusual responsibilities. It should not be difficult to re-introduce this method of 'in-service' training.

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Chapter 5

Summary

One of the difficulties met with in preparing and reading a report of this nature is that of keeping clearly in mind all the important features of what is in many ways a complex picture. It may be well, therefore, if at this point I summarize the data, section by section, before going on to draw conclusions and to make recommendations.

§ 1 Introductory

The decline of the small school. Since the first years of organized European settlement in New Zealand the number of schools grew steadily until 1927 when 2,601 public primary schools were open. Then followed a twenty-year decline to the 1947 figure of 1,900. The most important single cause of this decline has been the closing of small schools, sometimes through depopulation, sometimes by consolidation. (pp. 2-5)

An historical note. The idea of centralizing small country schools has been current since the eighties, but not until about 1925 was it accepted as official policy. From that time consolidation proceeded steadily, with the expressed intention of giving the country child facilities equal to those in the towns. War conditions checked the trend, and thus presented a favourable opportunity for taking stock of the position. (pp. 5-9)

Types of consolidation. The process of consolidation takes many forms, according to the number of schools closed in each case, the ages of the children involved, the size of the central schools, and the kind of community in which these

are placed. Almost every combination of size of school and type of community can be found, and the task of generalization is therefore a difficult one. (pp. 9-13)

Pros and cons. The arguments for and against centralization are complex. The first aim of this study has been to examine the situation directly, and to sum up the evidence bearing upon the question whether country children will receive a better education in larger central schools than in small local schools. (pp. 13-5)

§ 2 The School and its Children

The scope of the curriculum. In general little difference was found between the 'schemes of work' prepared by the teachers in the small schools and those in the consolidated schools of a particular district. In the broader subjects such as music, however, there were considerable variations from small school to small school, and from classroom to classroom in the large school. (pp. 25-7)

Organizing the work of the classroom. The usual method of arranging the curriculum was in the form of a progression of 'standards' or one-year syllabuses of instruction. In the basic individual skills, the small schools, with several classes in one room, were generally able to provide effectively the necessary instruction, and, indeed, adjusted their work to the differing abilities of the children rather better than did the larger schools where each class normally comprised children of one 'standard' working to a common syllabus. With the broader studies the small schools face difficulties that cannot be overcome while they maintain the usual division of the curriculum into one-year courses. (pp. 27-32)

Classification. Whatever the merits of the different methods of classification of pupils ('straight' classes, 'streamed' classes, 'composite' classes and so on) the large school has the advantage of being able to choose whichever is considered best. (pp. 32-5)

The basic skills. Except for the oldest children and the youngest the small schools appear to have done slightly better work in the basic skills of reading, arithmetic, and written English than all but the largest town schools. (pp. 35-42)

The broader studies. In music, literature, art, and the cultural studies generally, a finer quality of work was more consistently achieved by the older pupils in the larger schools. The small schools can show only sporadic and uneven results, as they are unable to provide for moderate specialization in several subjects at any one time and are seldom in a position to form specific interest groups among the pupils. (pp. 42-6)

Specialization. Though the special interests and abilitites of their teachers were still far from being generally used, the large schools had a great potential advantage here, especially in their higher classes. Wherever some degree of specialization had been introduced the standard of the cultural studies surpassed that which could be generally attained in the small school. A useful degree of specialization was achieved in some district high schools by pooling the resources of the staffs of both the intermediate and the secondary departments. (pp. 46-9)

Learning and teaching. The different kinds of school had different effects on the methods of teaching in use and upon the children's habits of learning. Close individual concentration, solitary industry, and individual activity were found in the small school, while greater variety in the presentation of lessons and more group activity among the pupils were found in the larger school. The infant classes of those sole-teacher schools which took children to Form II lacked the range of experiences provided in the larger schools. In schools which took pupils up to Standard 4 only, the younger children could be given a richer curriculum. (pp. 49-51)

Equipment. Provision of equipment on a more generous scale has in recent years placed the small schools in a favourable position. They have more equipment per child, and what

they have can be more flexibly used by the teachers and is more freely available to the small number of children who have to share it. (pp. 51-4)

Children's friendships. A wide circle of acquaintance is open to the child in the large school, and friendships can be made with those who are of the same age and level of maturity and who are compatible in nature and congenial in their interests. In the consolidated school such friendships extend far beyond the limits of the home locality. On the other hand, children in the small school learn to be responsible for the younger ones and to be looked after by the older ones in a way that is characteristic of family life. This has advantages for the younger children, but the older ones are unable to develop their deeper social interests in so restricted a circle. (pp. 55-60)

Child and teacher. Both teacher and child in the small school get to know each other much more intimately than is possible elsewhere. Each can see the other in the context of the family and the simple but complete community. Such understanding gives security to the child in the early years of life, and makes the teacher's work more rewarding. (pp. 61-2)

Games and sports. The play that is essential to the social and emotional growth of young children can be provided in a small school, but older children, whose social maturity needs wider group activities and team sports, are unduly restricted. While the consolidated school has some difficulty in giving enough time to such activities, it has much to offer the older children that they miss in the small school. (pp. 63-5)

The journey to school. Walking, cycling, or riding ponies is the usual way that children get to the small country school. They go with brothers, sisters, and neighbours, the same ones always together. The bus ride to the consolidated school, on the other hand, gives a wider opportunity for choosing and changing friends. (pp. 65-7)

Fatigue. On the average the time spent away from home each day is somewhat greater for those children who travel by bus to a consolidated school, and there are more cases of extremely long hours to be found among the bus children. Long hours and long bus trips undoubtedly cause the younger children more fatigue than is usual among those attending the local schools. (pp. 68-70)

Illness. Information about the effect of consolidation upon health is difficult to find. Parents appreciate the fact that their children get wet and cold far less often when they travel to school by bus; but it is likely that infections spread more widely when children attend the central school of a large district. Younger children travelling by bus appear to be unduly exposed to colds and other sicknesses. (pp. 70-2)

Children's meals. The usual midday lunches do not differ much from one type of school to the other. A few consolidated schools have made an effort, usually with inadequate facilities, to prepare meals specially suitable for those children who have an exceptionally long day. (pp. 72-3)

Dental and medical inspection. While medical and dental care can be given to children with greater ease in a central school, improvement in roads and transport in recent years has removed most of the difficulties that used to prevent country children from receiving proper attention. (pp. 73-4)

Special facilities. Consolidated schools need certain special facilities such as space for younger children to have a proper rest on stretchers, equipment for making hot drinks, and properly furnished rest-rooms for the use of children who cannot easily be sent home if unwell. (p. 74)

§ 3 The School and its Community

The changing status of the school. In earlier times the school played a wider part in the small rural community than it does today. With the growth of amenities in the settlements

and the increase in the number of specialized professional men and artisans both the school and the teacher came to be concerned rather more closely with their specifically scholastic functions. At the same time, economic development brought to an end the isolated self-sufficiency of the village settlements and made the larger townships the effective centres of economic and social life. For both reasons the school ceased to be in any real sense a focus of adult community life. (pp. 76-9)

Closing the school. The closing of the village schools had in most cases little direct effect upon the associational life of their localities. The teacher, however, as one who has always taken part in the organized activities of his community, is greatly missed when a school is closed. There are, too, important aspects of social life other than those concerned with the activities of clubs and associations, and they suffer considerably when a community loses its school. (pp. 79-82)

The consolidated school. The relationship between a consolidated school and its community varies according to the kind of school it is and the kind of community in which it is found. When one small school is closed and its children are taken to another small school in a similar locality little difference is made in this relationship; but when the consolidated school is a large one, placed in a township or borough, it has a very different relationship to the outlying districts. One of the most important effects that this kind of consolidated school can have is to knit together into an effective community children from a wide area. (pp. 83-8)

Reversing the process. There are districts where the rural population has shown a marked increase in recent years and where localities whose little schools were closed could now have two- or three-teacher schools. Meantime their consolidated schools have become so large that the pressure of increasing numbers of children on bus transport, and on school facilities, buildings, and equipment, has made them

far from suitable for primary education. Such aggregations will have to be broken up in some way, and it would be well to consider reversing the process of consolidation as far as the younger children are concerned. (pp. 88-90)

The pupils and the community. In modern educational theory much emphasis is placed upon the value to be derived from direct study of the social environment, from taking part in suitable activities of the community, and from making some collective contribution to its life. The small settlement can provide suitable material for the education of the young children, but for the older children to get some understanding of the complexity of modern social life the more highly differentiated communities of the townships and smaller boroughs provide greater opportunities. (pp. 90-4)

Parents and the school. Closer relations between the parents and the school can be fostered when the school is small in size and situated close to where its pupils live. The large school, especially a consolidated one, is more easily isolated, and it can suffer from lack of contact and from parental indifference. In the earlier years of life, particularly, such a gap can be fraught with serious consequences. (pp. 94-8)

Establishing district high schools. In a number of districts consolidation of primary schools has enabled secondary pupils to be conveyed more economically and in some places secondary departments have been established for the first time. Unless primary-school consolidation is itself desirable, however, it should not be the price remote settlers pay for their high schools. (pp. 98-100)

Costs. It seems probable that consolidated schools cost somewhat more than the schools they replace, for the expenditure on motor transport appears to be larger than the saving in teachers' salaries. On the other hand, services are being provided for the community through consolidated schools with greater economy than would be possible otherwise. Post-primary education, manual and technical instruction, dental

services, and conveyance to private schools must all be taken into account when costs are compared. (pp. 100-4)

§ 4 The School and its Teachers

Professional skills. The sole-charge teacher or head of a small school can acquire a range of professional skills and a knowledge of the breadth of his duties towards children, parents, school committees, the education board, and the community, that can hardly come about as easily under any other set of circumstances. The assistant in a large school on the other hand, under the supervision of an able headmaster, can become very proficient in the techniques of classroom teaching and in organizing the work of large numbers of children. Both situations provide valuable and complementary elements in the experience of those teachers who will later take up posts of wider responsibility. (pp. 105-9)

Knowledge of children. To know something of the personal history, the family background, the aptitudes, abilities, emotional needs, interests, ambitions, temperament, and character of the children in his care, few teachers are so well placed as those who work in a small school and live in the same settlement as their pupils. This is another factor that makes the small country school a source of valuable experience for teachers. (pp. 109-11)

The headmaster and his staff. Team work is more readily developed in a small school where the close and informal contacts among members of the staff make it a simple matter to co-ordinate the teaching, to exchange information about the children, and to plan the general organization of the school. In the large school it is hard for the headmaster to unify the work of his staff and ensure continuity in the children's studies without relying overmuch on his personal efforts and authority. In the consolidated school it is particularly difficult to secure adequate staff planning. (pp. 111-4)

Living conditions. The closing of several hundreds of small schools, many of which were provided with dwellings, has increased the difficulties of the young married men teachers in these times of housing shortage. The position of some women teachers, however, has been eased, for when the central school is situated in a township and is not too large they have a better chance of obtaining suitable board and social amenities than they did in earlier days when they staffed a majority of the sole-charge schools. (pp. 114-7)

Promotion. Consolidation has eliminated no small number of responsible positions in the service, and, together with the more generous staffing ratios of recent years, it has helped to bring about an increase in the proportion of assistants to headteachers in the primary schools. At the same time more schools of higher grade have come into being. To widen the scope for the exercise of responsibility it would probably be better for the service to have more small and medium-sized (Grade I to Grade Vc) and fewer large ones (Grades Vd, VI, and VII). (pp. 117-8)

Teacher-drivers. The fatigue and strain suffered by teacher-drivers on the more difficult routes, the unavoidable interruption of their normal preparation for work, and the serious obstacles which prevent them from building up professional co-operation with their colleagues far outweigh any of the advantages claimed for having teachers of the larger consolidated schools drive the buses. Driving by the teacher of the small school, on the other hand, involves fewer disadvantages. (pp. 118-22)

The efficiency of the teachers. No longer is there a marked difference in quality between teachers of the small and the large schools. Salary scales that place more weight upon the length of a teacher's service than upon the size of school he teaches in have helped the small schools. Improved living conditions in the country districts and the post-war housing shortage have also made rural schools more attractive,

especially to men teachers. These factors together ensure that it is not the youngest and least experienced teachers who have charge of the small schools nowadays. At the same time these schools still face certain handicaps. There is a constant tendency for teachers to move towards the larger centres, and the more efficient ones will have most chance of moving quickly. Furthermore, individual differences among teachers have a more profound effect on the small schools. The large schools tend towards a uniform quality, but the small schools can be exceedingly bad or exceptionally good. Their teachers should therefore be carefully chosen and given special help. (pp. 122-7)

Chapter 6

Recommendations

WITH this brief review of the main lines of evidence before us it is time to pass judgment upon the central problem of this study. In so doing one must necessarily go beyond the limits of a simple statement of the facts and try to give each of them its due weight. It may be well to recall that in the process of weighing up the facts there are certain principles to be kept in mind. The first is that the relevance of the facts themselves is determined by the particular educational philosophy appropriate to the times. It is, for example, this consideration which leads one to judge that a slight superiority in certain basic subjects such as arithmetic in small rural schools does not compensate for their deficiencies in the broader cultural subjects now regarded as essential for our children. The second principle is that, since circumstances change, arguments that were once valid and relevant may no longer be so. In the present investigation this has been taken into account throughout. Statements pointing out that the small schools were staffed with uncertificated, inefficient teachers were undoubtedly true at one time and had their relevance, but they are considered here in the light of the situation as it is now. Doubtless the present position will change too, and arguments that are accepted in this report may lose something of their relevance in the future. Finally, in comparing two situations one must try to keep in mind at the same time what is and what could be. Some differences between schools of various types are in a sense extrinsic and accidental: they could be changed. Others are intrinsic, stemming from the

very nature of the school, and they are not easily amenable to control. The provision of better equipment, the payment of higher salaries, and the grouping of children of different ages within the one classroom are factors which can be altered by administrative action in any type of school if it is thought desirable to alter them. On the other hand, such circumstances as the number of children in attendance, and the distance of the school from the home, are part of the nature of a particular kind of school and cannot be altered within the existing framework. Before contemplating such a major intrinsic change as consolidation brings about, we should consider first whether the desired improvements could be obtained in other ways.

Keeping these principles in mind we must weigh up each of the lines of evidence. A point-by-point evaluation would be tedious here, but from the foregoing summary the reader will readily be able to follow my reasoning. It will be enough for me to indicate the general conclusions that seem justified and to go on to make specific recommendations based upon them. The relevance of some of the arguments will be more specifically indicated in notes on the recommendations.

In the main it would seem possible to provide very well for the educational needs of the younger children in the small country school, so long as there are enough of them to ensure a certain amount of companionship and social activity and to give the school some stability over the years, and so long as the teachers are not at the same time faced with the problem of giving an adequate schooling to older children. The main defects to be observed at present in small schools are too much formalism in the teaching, too much quiet desk work, and too little variety of activities appropriate to the needs of the younger children. These deficiencies are found most often when the whole range of primary and intermediate children have to be cared for and the needs of the older groups make severe demands upon the teacher. Where there are only primary children, up to the age of eleven or twelve, teachers can more easily use more appropriate methods.

We must place a great deal of weight, too, upon the likelihood that it is better for the health of the smaller children to be able to avoid the crowded conditions and the long tiring day of the consolidated school. It is possible that in the future staffing difficulties will ease somewhat and will allow of much smaller classes, at least in the junior departments of the larger schools. It may even become possible in more populous areas for the number of bus trips to be doubled in order to provide separate services at different times for juniors and seniors. Such improvements as these would make consolidated schools pleasanter places for young children. In the meantime the situation as it now exists must be faced.

The general quality of rural life must be considered, too, and we cannot disregard the subtle yet important ways in which a small community has its life made richer by the presence of its own school and teacher. Parents, in particular, find more satisfaction in their lives when their younger children are growing up near at hand.

For reasons such as these, all of which are important and relevant, at least for our generation, one cannot but conclude that it is desirable to retain the local country schools for the younger children. There is, of course, room for improvement in many of the practices of the small school, but as far as the younger children are concerned such improvement can be brought about within the existing framework. But the small school as such cannot be made suitable for the older children; it cannot give the cultural breadth needed by them. Nor can it reach such high standards of work in the broader subjects, for such standards are dependent on a moderate degree of specialization of interest and ability on the part of the teachers. Nor can it provide a variety of optional classes and clubs, based on differences in the children's own interests and abilities, which can play a valuable and important part in fostering cultural activities. Opportunity to make the acquaintance of a number of other children of varied natures, interests, backgrounds, and ambitions is of crucial importance to children just prior to and during adolescence, and many of the basic

needs of the growing personality fail to be satisfied when companions with congenial natures and interests are lacking.

The young adults from small communities suffer, too, if they are discouraged, by lack of friendship during their youth, from joining in the wider circle of social life open to them in a central township or settlement. Country life, therefore, stands to gain considerably over the years when the integrating effect of a central schooling leads to the growth of a spirit of unity through wider districts.

I conclude, then, that in rural areas consolidated schools are essential for children at the intermediate and secondary stages of school life. Not only could the educational needs of these older children be better provided for in this way, but the withdrawal of senior pupils from the small school would make it easier for the younger children to be properly cared for. There is, of course, no absolutely definite point at which we must draw a line between the 'older' and 'younger' pupils. For most children the age of twelve or thirteen is not too young for making fuller provision for their intellectual and social needs by a wider schooling, and any later is too late. Eight- and nine-year-olds, on the other hand, can be well looked after in the little school and should be left there; they have more to lose than to gain by consolidation. The tens and elevens (typically in Standard 4) present a less clear-cut picture. These seem to be the borderline ages: they would gain something of social breadth in the larger school, but they would lose something of the homelike intimacy of the smaller. Taking into account the strain of bus travel and the length of the school day, particularly in the less populous areas, I think they too would be better left in the local school. On the whole the break after Standard 4 would seem to be best in the New Zealand educational context. I recommend accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION 1

In general the local country school should be retained for children at the primary stage (Infants to Standard 4 inclusive).

NOTES

(a) In making this recommendation I am expressing my conviction that the main educational needs of primary school children can be suitably cared for in even a small school. This does not imply that primary schooling should be narrow and restricted to the three Rs; indeed, the cultural breadth that is so obviously called for later is needed in some degree at every age. With primary children, however, less differentiation of studies and not so much specialization of staff are necessary to ensure an adequate breadth of development. Nor does the smaller and less differentiated social group show serious inadequacies till a later stage.

(b) It is impossible to lay down any rigid minimum of children required before a school should be established or retained. So much depends upon the supply of teachers, the remoteness of the locality, and the trend of population change. The optimum size of a sole-charge primary school would probably be somewhere between twelve and twenty-five pupils. With fewer than a dozen children it is hard to ensure a rich enough social experience: the age groups may be very unevenly matched, uncongenial natures may be kept too closely together, and so on. In such cases it would be wise to consider taking the pupils to a nearby school, if this could be done without unduly lengthening their school day.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Where it is not possible to retain a local primary school, the children should be conveyed to the most suitable neighbouring small school.

NOTES

(a) Whether it is practicable to keep a school open in any particular locality depends primarily upon the number of children, the number and quality of the teachers available, and the attractiveness of the position. In recent years improved

salary scales, more amenities, and easier access to larger centres have already done much to make the country school more attractive, especially to young married men teachers, yet there are still many districts which cannot get or keep a suitable teacher. At present the most important thing that can be done to ensure stability of staffing in difficult localities would seem to be to increase the number of good school residences.

(b) In my opinion a better primary education can be given in a series of small or medium-sized local country schools than in a large central school. This recommendation envisages an increase in such schools with the growth of rural population, rather than an increase in centralization. It must be recognized, however, that in some places it may be inadvisable to convey children across country from one small settlement to the next: the configuration of the land, the location and condition of the roads, and the availability of transport will often make a trip to the central township quicker and more convenient for everyone.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Consolidated intermediate departments should be established in country townships.

NOTES

(a) I am convinced that small schools cannot give the children of Forms I and II the broader education for which they are ready. A measure of centralization at this stage makes possible a fuller social development and a richer growth of individual talents and interests. The children can be placed under the guidance of a team of teachers who are themselves able to pursue their special interests at the same time as they attend to the basic schooling of their pupils. Centralization widens the young people's circle of human relationships and enriches both the individual and the district.

(b) Centralization would seem to be better for intermediate pupils than taking them from one small locality to another in order to build up complete (i.e. primary plus intermediate)

schools in the outlying districts. The intermediate departments of such schools would not be large enough to work effectively. Moreover it is highly desirable that there should be close co-operation between the intermediate department and the secondary department of the district high school which will usually be found in the central township.

Recommendation 4

Consolidated schools should be placed only in settlements that themselves can have an effective community life and that are centres, at least potentially, of a wider community embracing the surrounding districts.

NOTES

(a) The value of a school to pupils, teachers, and parents is greatly diminished if it is not situated in a place where a community spirit is or could be active. The debilitating effects of an unfortunate site may be clearly seen in schools which are on the very boundaries of different sociological areas—on the watersheds, so to speak, between separate streams of community life. Some of the families are pulled towards one centre, some towards another, and the school itself is at a point from which all lines of community attraction diverge and upon which none converge. The school works in isolation instead of in close relationship with a community.

(b) The choice of the best place for a consolidated school should be determined only after a careful study is made of the sociological structure of the district. It should not be allowed to be the resultant of uninformed parochial jealousies and the struggle of local pressure groups acting from motives that are not relevant to educational needs.

Recommendation 5

In the larger townships the consolidated intermediate and secondary departments of district high schools should be separated from the primary departments.

NOTES

(a) In general the centres to which the children of Forms I

and II will be taken will already have district high schools, and in other cases consolidation will make possible the establishment of secondary departments. The effect of centralizing at the intermediate and secondary levels will be to increase greatly the relative size of the senior age groups in the school. The small primary department would be better separate than merely the appendage of a top-heavy consolidated unit. On the other hand, except in very large centres, it is likely that both the intermediate and the secondary departments could function more effectively by sharing their staffs and equipment than by being separate from each other. There would be little danger of a secondary department in a small country centre being too academic and thus unduly narrowing the educational outlook of the intermediate department.

(b) In very large centres, and in towns where there might be more than one kind of secondary school, it might be advisable to have independent intermediate schools. The scope of this enquiry, however, has not provided information which would justify me in giving an opinion on this particular issue.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The primary departments of large consolidated schools should gradually be disestablished whenever the population of the contributory districts will permit the reopening of local schools large enough to be reasonably stable.

NOTES

(a) In some centres the consolidated schools are already so large and overcrowded that immediate action is called for. Rather than build two consolidated primary schools in one small town it would be better to open or reopen outlying schools at the primary level, retaining consolidated intermediate and secondary departments.

(b) A careful study of population trends would have to be made in any districts where disestablishment was contemplated. There are some districts where rapid growth has

already put the consolidated school in a difficult position, and where decentralization could well take place at once. In others there is a prospect of early overcrowding which should be prepared for in advance. The population of some districts, on the other hand, has been declining for many years and appears likely to go on declining. Unless a large number of children is concerned it would be unwise to disestablish the consolidated school in such places. Where, however, there is a stable or a growing population of reasonable size the local schools should be reopened as soon as buildings and teachers become available.

(c) How large a school should be before it could be regarded as reasonably stable is a question which would have to be examined and decided for each case separately. One must be cautious in applying a policy of decentralization. One cannot wantonly advocate the establishment of little schools which may live only a year or two and then have to be closed again through lack of pupils or teachers. In my opinion an education board would need to be assured by a study of population trends that a locality had good prospects of maintaining at least a fairly large sole-charge school (say twenty to thirty pupils) before it would be justified in reopening a school that had been consolidated. This caution is all the more necessary where new school buildings would have to be provided.

Recommendation 7

Special care should be taken to select suitable teachers for the small school, and special help should be given them in their exacting work.

NOTES

(a) So much depends on the personality and special qualities of the teacher, and the educational consequences of an unfortunate choice are so serious to the small school, that impersonal methods of selection such as those based primarily upon grading marks cannot be too strongly condemned for these appointments. A method like that of 'special positions' might well be used when appointing sole-charge teachers and headteachers of small schools.

(b) Opportunities for in-service training should be increased by the provision of refresher courses specifically devoted to the problems of the small school, and by reintroducing 'organizing teachers' for country districts.

Recommendation 8

The buildings and equipment of consolidated schools should make special provision for the needs of children who will be a long way from home for many hours each day.

NOTES

(a) Consolidated intermediate and secondary departments, more than any other kind of school, need facilities for preparing and eating suitable meals, properly equipped rest-rooms for sick children, especially for adolescent girls, arrangements for the drying of wet clothes, individual lockers large enough for storing personal property, and a music room in which individual tuition can be given throughout the day.

(b) Consolidated primary departments need suitable meal facilities, drying equipment, portable canvas beds, and a room in which the younger children can have an afternoon rest.

Recommendation 9

School transport routes should, wherever possible, be arranged in such a way that the buses can be conveniently used by the younger children who attend the outlying primary schools as well as by the older ones attending the central intermediate and secondary schools.

NOTES

Even if consolidation takes place only at the intermediate level the advantages of bus travel need not be withheld from primary pupils living some distance from their local schools. Certain modifications would have to be made in the usual arrangements. The system of having buses garaged near the consolidated school and making the outward trip first is not suitable for the purpose of conveying children to their local

schools, for in this way they arrive at school far too early in the morning and leave far too late in the afternoon. A much better method (which, of course, presents certain practical difficulties in some districts) is to have the buses garaged in the outlying contributory settlements. On the inward trip to the consolidated school in the morning the bus takes the intermediate and secondary pupils, and on the outward trip it collects pupils for the local primary school. Where outside drivers cannot be obtained teachers from outlying schools could be used. There are fewer disadvantages in this practice than in having the consolidated school teachers drive.

Recommendation 10

The practice of employing teachers as bus drivers should be progressively discontinued.

NOTES

It is realised that in some districts there will be considerable difficulty in finding drivers and that it is always simpler from the administrative point of view to ensure continuity of drivers if driving is made a condition of the teacher's appointment. Yet the educational disadvantages to the consolidated schools themselves are so great that no efforts should be spared gradually to replace teacher-drivers by outside drivers.

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